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Leading a Small African Methodist Episcopal Church Through the Process of Building Sacred Space for Worship and Community Service in Houston, Texas

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Leading a Small African Methodist Episcopal Church Through the Process of Building Sacred Space for Worship and Community Service in Houston, Texas

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Carol W. Echols

Dedication

To the faithful devoted members of Visions African Methodist Episcopal Church for your patience, love, and cooperation during this adventure toward building a place of worship and work for the people in Southwest Houston.

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Abstract

Not much time is spent in seminary on the process of building a place of worship. In the current secular climate of the world, with declining church memberships, the necessity to build requires clarification and examination based on scriptural analysis of God's intention in the world. Simultaneously, the people of God must be led in a process that develops a nurturing, biblical community that is ready to minister in a new setting. Emotionally mature and prepared leadership is required to facilitate the building of sacred space and a discipled people.

Preface

In the twenty-first century, when the church no longer carries the prominence it once carried in the communities of America and when church attendance is declining and truth is questioned, the church, as an institution, needs to be re-imagined. The empowering, transforming, liberating *ecclesia* that is the body of Christ must return to its original purpose.

The pastor and leadership team must be prepared to minister to the people of God in this climate of uncertainty. As the leadership influences a congregation's health, efficiency, and growth potential, responsible, thoughtful, and informed guidance with a sense of mutuality has to be evident from the start. To do so requires exemplary, self-differentiated, emotionally mature leaders, who learn to operate on a set of guiding principles with clear self-boundaries. Emotional maturity requires sustained inner growth, which moves the leader past the reactivity learned during childhood. Differentiation is a life force of individuality, where one can be freely and fully oneself, while being part of a community, separated enough to think with maturity but not separate relationally. Guiding principles allow one to stand alone if need be, yet to be open, calm, and respectful as decisions are made and lives are affected. To lead is to influence, and courage will be necessary to navigate the complexities of worship, transformative learning, and construction with purpose.

The maturing leader, to embody a church of purpose, may be called to ponder what a house of worship, teaching, learning, serving, and fellowshipping might look like

in the 21st century. Jesus taught in the synagogues, on mountainsides, by the seashore, on a borrowed boat, and in the homes of willing hosts. Is the financial commitment required for a new facility necessary? If so, how does one lead the people toward a discipleship that is transformational in a world full of anxiety, chaos, fear, and loss of significance?

This project proposes to answer some of those questions by addressing the following topics: (1) What the re-imagined church looks like; (2) Whether it is necessary to build new houses of worship; and (3) How one leads the community of faith toward establishing missional purposes in the process of reimagining the church.

Chapter I

Introduction

The subject of this study is the leading of Visions African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (hereafter Visions) in the building of a Family Life Center in an existing, older subdivision in the Southwest Houston/Missouri City area. What was observed was a lack of definitive guidance from the denomination in the preconstruction feasibility phase, so necessary for the successful construction of twenty-first-century ministry space. While the local pastor, local trustees, and congregation are responsible for the details of the work, some additional recommended input needs to be addressed in a systematic, instructive, reproducible process. This is inclusive of needs assessment, fiscal preparedness, debt liquidation planning, and ministry focuses for the community surrounding the site post-construction. Conference Trustees must approve the plans for construction, but, as a rule, they are not charged with the formulation of a specific plan for each church.

Of paramount importance, leading any group of people is challenging. Leading through a building project with long-reaching, futuristic potential and/or consequences is stressful, anxiety-ridden, demanding, and arduous. In his book, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times,* Peter L. Steinke writes that the ability of a congregation in a critical moment to maneuver through tumultuous waters is dependent upon the key leadership's response to anxiety-ridden situations. He describes anxiety as a natural

reaction intended for self-preservation that can have a deleterious effect on human capacity to think, be creative, behave thoughtfully, and expend productive energy. This is more evident when anxiety is prolonged or intense, as in this case, with a possible building project. In its negative consequences, anxiety can have repressive, infectious, and reactive consequences. The pastor has to be a non-anxious presence, acknowledging anxiety but not letting it direct behavior. Steinke warns that leaders must be self-driven and clearly see the part self plays in automatic reactions. Maintaining self is critical for a leader. How anxiety, whether acute or chronic, is addressed is the greatest determinant for successful outcomes for leaders in congregational life.[1]

After several informal discussions with church officers, it became apparent that there were varying views concerning the utility of a church edifice as it relates to the worship space, flexible ministry spaces, dining areas, classrooms, and offices. Friendly debates were entertained over the perceived needs and furnishings. The discussions included the use of traditional pews and their appeal over stackable, cushioned, sanctuary chairs; providing a fully functioning kitchen versus a non-cooking serving area; or expandable classrooms versus office space. This dichotomy presented an excellent opportunity to begin some theological discussions on defining the church. Enlightenment, based on a biblical perspective, would influence the decisions pertaining to the possible construction of an edifice and/or church complex, providing clarity and often consensus. Preparation of the people of God needed to include evaluation of mindsets for ministry and transformational instruction to align with Kingdom purposes. Strategic planning

1. Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), xi-xii, 3-14.

would address some of the practical considerations necessary to prevent costly overruns, wasted resources, and chances for interruption of the work. Included in items presented for discussion were guidance for site selection and bank selection, identifying funding constraints, municipality constraints pre- and post-construction, building plans and construction materials, anticipated costs, and reasonable contingency/overrun costs.

The primary work of the church, which includes ministering to the needs of others, also needed to be addressed in a concise manner prior to construction. To neglect this facet might have led to an attractive new facility with a hefty mortgage note each month but no parishioners or new worshipers. Well-designed ministries, based on assessment of the neighborhood near the site area, can positively impact the surrounding community for future construction activities and should be in place and funded as a part of the planning process. Preparation of the leadership for embracing new congregants and new believers, as well as sharing in their training, needed to be evaluated, honed, and solidified. Commitment to the process was needed from the congregation; therefore, opportunities for inclusiveness in the process were strategically presented. Intentional prayer support from planning stages to completion were undertaken by a committed, organized group of intercessors. Divine interventions and heavenly guidance were always welcome, necessary, and foundational for Kingdom purposes.

Visions was organized in 1994, in Missouri City, Texas, at the home of the Founder. The church held Bible studies at the home for two and a half years, while celebrating the Sunday worship experience at a Holiday Inn on the Southwest Freeway in Houston, Texas. Until August 2019, the church was holding all activities in a leased space in a small strip center on Texas Parkway in Stafford, Texas, and it has been in this

location since August 1999. The facility was approximately 2,180 square feet, offering an open theatre-style worship space seating seventy to one hundred persons, a designated altar and pulpit space, a fellowship hall and a serving-only kitchen, two dual-sex bathrooms (one with a urinal and commode), a protected children's area, a spot for pre-teens, and one office. Most other businesses in the strip mall remained closed on Sunday morning, so parking was adequate. Evening services posed some challenges, but space had been sufficient in the past with the assistance of the ushers/parking attendants. Texas Parkway is a major travel route for persons living in Missouri City or Pearland heading into Houston and, thus, provides great visibility.

In August 2019, Visions relocated to the Heaven on Earth Event Venue, which is a mansion sitting on six acres of land with a free-standing chapel and a full sanctuary in the main house. The location is less than a mile from the previous location, is more aesthetically pleasing, and provides opportunity for additional events.

The Texas Annual Conference quitclaim deeded a 0.8674-acre tract of land to Visions located in the Briargate Subdivision of southwest Houston.[2] At the time of writing, the predominantly black, lower-middle-class neighborhood consisted of single-family homes built in the early 1970s, most in fair condition. Single mothers led half of the households, and there were four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school (currently low performing) educating the children in the area. Within a two- to three-mile drive from this location were two established megachurches, namely The Fountain of Praise and New Light Church, as well as twenty-seven other faith-based

2. Visions subsequently sold a 0.0233-acre parcel of the tract to the City of Houston on April 2013 in preparation of the Fondren Road completion project, taking the road from the southeastern edge of the church property to McHard Road.

churches or organizations. The closest denominational church near this site was a fledgling congregation four and a half miles to the north.[3]

Project Outcomes and Measurable Assessment

The first outcome of this project was to create a strategic plan for use by Visions, with a process adaptable for future use by other denominational churches within Texas (known as the Tenth Episcopal District). This document was made available to the Trustees of the Texas Annual Conference while seeking approval of its use before submission to the Episcopal District for use and approval. Feedback and requested modifications were anticipated due to the diversity of locales across the state that would need a format that would be meaningful and user friendly. Input and other identified resources were incorporated in the document. The measure of satisfactorily completing this outcome would be its use by Visions and, if possible, at least one other church considering construction.[4] The research dictated the frequency of revisions in the future.

The second, two-fold outcome required preparation of a document ready for submission to proposed lending institutions for Visions. Visions needed a financial feasibility document to better evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and areas that required additional work before considering construction. The completion of a document worthy of submission was the first measure of this outcome. Additionally, no recommended template was available for churches within the denomination to guide this document

3. Demographic information came from a Briargate, Houston, TX, Lifestyle and Demographics site and Mapquest inquires using the given address of the church property of 15945 Gatebriar, Houston, TX 77489. See http://www.realtor.com/local/Briargate-Sub_Houston_TX/lifestyle (accessed on Nov. 4, 2014).

4. This preconstruction document may or may not be used by a denominational church, although using it is preferable.

preparation process. One recently constructed sister church was given the template for feedback on its ease of duplication, which also served as a measure of successful completion of this outcome.

The final and most important outcome was the measure of the congregation's readiness to undertake the construction project, both from a ministry service perspective and financial commitment perspective. To fulfill this outcome, a church conference was planned to disclose the anticipated level of involvement needed from congregants, including capital campaign pledges and donations. The second aspect for fulfillment was to utilize Survey Monkey to measure an anonymous inquiry into individual levels of commitment to the project. Next, initiation was needed for twice-monthly training classes with the leadership to address ongoing spiritual needs that would need to be maintained at the current location throughout the building process. Ideas for implementation of this element included the use of online conferencing technology to improve attendance and participation and use of a self-assessment tool to measure increased involvement in ministry activities in the church, with a ten percent increase as a success threshold.

As new ministries are formulated to address needs for reaching the Briargate area, a measure of the impact on resources, personnel, and finances would be assessed. Use of gifts in kind, donations, and volunteerism would offset some of the financial impact. Another survey is the tool planned to elicit opinions on this shifting focus. Finally, forty to fifty percent of the capital campaign financial goal needed to be secured before the construction process was ready for launch. Progress in building the fund was measured quarterly. Campaign envelopes, posters tracking thermometer-style progress toward the

financial goal, and special appeal materials added to and tracked on the Church's Facebook donation section presented additional concrete measures.

Relevant History of Visions African Methodist Church

Visions was officially organized in February 1994 in the home of the Pastor/Founder and has continued under this shepherd since that time. With a fledgling membership of twenty-five, mostly women, young adults, and children, the mission was to speak to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of the communities of Missouri City, Stafford, and Southwest Houston. The focus was on reclaiming those who had fallen away from the fellowship of believers due to lack of diligence, perceived or real offenses that occurred within the body of Christ, and/or breaches in faith of the leadership. Matt. 18:12 states, "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?" The church remains motivated to develop fruit for the Kingdom of God, save the lost, and serve the needy. With a fusion of neo-Pentecostal and traditional worship styles, Visions developed partnerships within the four walls and without, assisting other community entities and denominational connections in providing services to humanity. As a didactic and deliverance ministry, members are empowered, and lives are transformed by teaching the principles of the Kingdom of God and working toward meaningful relationship with the Triune God. The congregation's size has ebbed and flowed through the years and currently stands around forty-eight. Three ministers have served and trained with the Pastor over the years, going on to influence other harvest fields as God has called.

Topics for Project Research

In a denominational church, it is easy to slip into the practice of traditional patterns of worship and church polity without examining the biblical or theological worthiness of such actions. Initial research for this project centered on seeking to clarify the understanding of "church" as the body Christ, not as the architectural structures that denote houses of worship. In the following chapter, research examines the biblical models of the earthly tabernacle, the divine design which was given to Moses as a pattern of the heavenly tabernacle, and the expanded utilitarian temple of Solomon. In addition, research explores how these patterns were fulfilled in the synagogue setting during the early church period.

The church edifice, in terms of what it represents in the life of the community in which it is housed, has transformed over time and locale. Research from this historical perspective should be meaningful for the pre-construction phase. Current trends in worship and ministry facilities will be explored with the purpose of arriving at a conceptual architectural plan for a twenty-first-century church. Juxtaposed to the considerations for the structural church were the postmodern practices of worship and community outreach impacted by the missional and emerging church movements. For added consideration, the unchurched may be better attracted to a "consumer-friendly" outer appearance of a church complex, and research in this area may suggest some surprising attitudes on this subject. Finally, the critical need for emotionally stable,

differentiated leadership, necessitates some investigation into ways to move toward that transformation.

Project Overview

The goal was to assess the construction readiness of this local church in the pursuit of establishing a more permanent worship and meeting space. The proposed facility would need to allow for a more meaningful impact on the ministries in which the church was involved. Thoughtful consideration was given to the biblical, theological, and historical concepts that guided the final plans. Impact for the present and future benefits of the church's presence in this community would be maximized if all of these factors were considered.

To aid in project effectiveness, inclusion of the entire congregation, under the leadership of the Pastor and elected Trustees, is planned throughout the evaluation process. Acknowledging equality of everyone, in respect to importance, responsibility, and personhood, is a key component in the maintenance of extraordinary relationships and facilitation of effective communication and cooperation. The spiritual undergirding of the work, requiring prayer support teams to intercede for the success of the project, provided foundational support. Attention to the continued spiritual formation of the members, emphasizing operating in their areas of giftedness, guided the Bible study, sermon, and guest workshop topics. Part of this didactic focus included an exploration of missional concepts. A special event for the neighborhood surrounding the construction lot introduced the church to the neighborhood and began to identify those persons seeking a place to transform or begin the life journey to live into the image of Christ.

Steps to achieve the project's goals and outcomes included: 1) research of books and journal articles on concepts of leadership, church, worship, church architecture, utility of worship and service space, and the future direction of the church to project "building forward" design, 2) interviews with pastors who had maneuvered the hurdles of church construction, and 3) accessing denominational resources where appropriate. The report will now turn to the research chapter.

Chapter II

Historical, Theological, and Biblical Perspectives on Sacred Space

Twenty-one years ago, in 1998, a new term, "missional," emerged as applied to the church. It was introduced to the Christian community in a book titled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Led by Darrell L. Guder, this publication was the culminating effort in a collaborative project between six academically prepared, ecumenically diverse, ordained missiologists.[1] The writings presented a reformed, theological construct for a postmodern *ecclesia* in North America, palpably in crisis.[2] Prior to Guder's observation, David J. Bosch in his opus, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, suggested that what has unfolded in theological and missionary circles during the last decades is the result of a fundamental paradigm shift, not only in mission or theology, but also in the experience and thinking of the whole world.[3] While many Christians recognized the signs of spiritual erosion in society, evidence of deterioration was noticeable in the body of Christ as well. The declines in the Christian West (European and North American churches) were both cultural and geographic, placing the Western church in a new missionary situation. Proof was observable in declining church attendance, declines in church growth, loss of the

1. Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998).

2. Ibid., 3.

3. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 4.

youth and young adult demographic, mega-congregations with loss of connection between congregants, televangelist substitutions for congregational worship, and widely varying views and expressions of who and what the church represented.

Strategies to address these concerns by church growth specialists failed to address the theological voids in a formal manner.[4] Spiritual and theological issues spoke to the core of purpose for the body of Christ and to explain its character. Purpose, however, the reason for which the church has been called into existence, was not central to the church growth period. The root cause of the inner discontent was not adequately placed into dialogue, and defining the church became the next focus.

Ecclesiology became the central organizing principle of twentieth century theology.[5] A missional reorientation of the *ecclesia* thus represented an important shift in the focus from technique or procedure to identity. The conversation once filtered the gospel and culture through the lens of church, missing what was transpiring in the biblical narratives. This focus threatened to prevent the engagement of the people of this current age with its radically pluralistic composition.[6] In response, questions for Christendom shifted from who the church evangelizes in a postmodern world, to how the church reshapes its understanding of self, to how the church aligns with the mission of Christ in the world. This mission is not merely an activity of the church, but rather a result of God's initiative and purpose to restore and heal humankind. The central, biblical

4. Guder, *Missional Church*, 3.

5. Michael W. Goheen, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology," *International Review of Mission* 91, 362 (2002): 345–69, accessed February 12, 2014, www.newbigin.net/assets/pdf/lnme_g.pdf.

6. Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 54.

theme, "mission" or "sending," describes the purpose of God's action and interaction in human history.[7]

A giant among missional and theological minds of the twentieth century, Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin spent forty years nurturing the church in South India. His Western ecclesiologies, formulated in the context of the Christianized culture of England, ill prepared him for the realities of the work in a cultural context. The experience produced two major shifts in his missionary ecclesiology. Initially, he saw the church as a gathering of individual believers who had responded to the message of the Scriptures, and subsequently assembled that the life of Christ might mature and flourish. His reflection on the gospel did not include a discussion of the church. A decade later, by the 1950s, the church took on a central role in Newbigin's understanding of the gospel. In his way of thinking, Jesus left behind a community to spread and communicate the Kingdom of God, not a book.[8] The way Jesus lived conveyed the mission and purpose for the community God had sent him to save.

Newbigin was later joined by voices like missiologist David Bosch, who espoused a Trinitarian doctrine that emphasized that God the Father sent the Son, and God the Father and the Son sent the Spirit, and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sent the church into the world.[9] In his view, pastors and leaders must subsequently return to biblical mandates for the *ecclesia* from a Trinitarian perspective, being transformed in order to transform. Bosch saw in the Matt 28:18-20 text, known as the Great Commission, a belief

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7. Guder, *Missional Church,* 4.

8. Goheen, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You,'" 346.

9. Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) 34; Guder, *Missional Church,* 5; Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 390.

that the making of disciples is in itself, missional fulfillment.[10] Missiologists emphasize daring new roles for leadership and shifts in congregational understanding for those convicted to follow this movement.

The adjective "missional" expresses the essence of the church as the people called of God and sent into the world to fulfill God's purpose. The "mission of God," *missio Dei*, as expressed by Lesslie Newbigin, highlighted the Trinitarian understanding of God's mission in the world, proclaimed by Jesus, pointing always to the Kingdom of God.[11] The mission of the church is to collaborate and participate with the ongoing work of redemption in the world, led by the Holy Spirit. The *missio Dei* purifies the church, and the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus is "mission." Bosch defines it as the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.[12] Put another way, Roxburgh and Romanuk provide a meaningful definition for missional church, namely, a community of God's people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God's missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ.[13] All these definitions are unified around the understanding that God has a mission for the sake of the world and that Jesus was sent and in turn has sent disciples to follow the plan.

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10. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 56-83.

11. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Church*, accessed February 19, 2014, http://www.newgibin.net/assets/pdf/83os84.pdf. Though the *missio Dei* is more implied as a central theme than explicitly stated, Newbigin is credited with its use among missiologist. See Craig Van Gelder, "From Corporate Church to Missional Church: The Challenge Facing Congregations Today," *Review & Expositor* 101, no. 3 (2004), 425–8, accessed February 19, 2014.

12. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

13. Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), xv.

These three streams of thought, which refocus one's understanding of God in the world, likewise require a readjusting of the way Christians function as the body of Christ. The streams require that believers bend their world back to God's intended design. Biblical and theological engagement set the foundations for change found interwoven throughout the threads of the Scriptures, and they anchor the work and the thrust of the missional movement. Uncertainty colors the landscape of daily existence in the biblical narratives, which should be comforting. For the believer, an omnipresent God, not moved by climate change, or technological advances, or medical discoveries, or cultural plurality, provides the name of his restorative key, Jesus, the Christ. To carry that name and live into a way of life following his teachings, daring to live it out before a world in need of an ongoing salvific opportunity, is mission.[14]

As the saints reconceive and reformulate the church's mission, the venue or holy space where that mission is carried out requires a reexamination of physical arenas occupied and their utility. Is it necessary to have a church edifice? Is the monetary investment mission worthy, and does it take precedence over human needs? In the first century, worship is moved from pagan temples to the holy space of temple/synagogue. Most meetings were gatherings in homes or catacombs. The New Testament does not discuss earthly church structures because of this evolution, bringing Jewish synagogue practices of the assembly of Israel to the house church with its appropriate Christian practices.[15]

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14. The previous pages are excerpts from a class assignment entitled, "A Process for Leading a Congregation to Embrace Missional Concepts."

15. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University, 2005), 21.

Many consider that the idea of synagogue originated during the Babylonian captivity with Ezekiel's "little temple" or "dwelling place" (Ezek 11:16). Perhaps these local Jewish worship sites were a proliferation of what began as alternative Jewish temples. According to Douglas W. Kennard, the synagogue provided worship that imitated temple practices for those who did not make the pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple for temple worship days. Additionally, the synagogue was where the Sabbath meal was served.[16]

Early Judaism credited Moses with the inception of assembling Israel for covenant reading and such practices as celebrating Passover, reading the Scriptures, lament for Israel's sin, atonement, and communal worship (Exod 12:3; 24:7). Yahweh was the judge of Israel's obedience to the Law. In the post-Moses era, the Pharisees became associated with the development of village Judaism and synagogues to develop obedience to the Law and the teaching of the elders. Each Jewish town would have at least one synagogue building, with additional sacred spaces, like a freedman synagogue, and a Jewish Christian synagogue, in more populated cities (Luke 7:5; Acts 6:9; James 2:2; 5:14).

The earliest synagogue ruin found so far is at Delos (from second century BC) but several synagogue ruins remain in Israel from the first century AD, including Gamla, Magdala, Herodion, Masada, and Horvat Ethri. The structure of a synagogue building was known as an assembly place or prayer place (Isa 56:7; 1 Kgs 8:22). Synagogue buildings would usually have windows where the columns would support an elevated roof portion and stadium seating on three walls with additional seating on some wooden

16. Douglas W. Kennard, "The Roots and Effect of Synagogue on Church." Excerpts on synagogue and temple practices were shared by permission of the author.

chairs and reed mats in the center.[17] There was a centralized small table to roll out a scroll (the best is at Magdala) and a "seat of Moses" for the head elder to govern the service, and some raised seating from which to teach (Matt 23:2, 6; Luke 8:41). The "messenger" of the synagogue would lead the congregation in reciting public prayers, reading the Scriptures, and explaining it in the accepted traditional manner of that community, though others could also explain the interpretation (Luke 4:16; Acts 15:21; 13:15), fulfilling a similar practice as reading the Law in the temple. Additionally, Sabbath biblical literacy instruction would be provided for boys to prepare them for Jewish adulthood. An extension of this *torah* focus is that the synagogue and the elders who oversaw the synagogue would fulfill a judicial function of instructing appropriate behavior ("loosed"), disciplining even with scourging to recover individuals, and excluding behavior beyond appropriate ("bound") (Matt 10:17-18; 23:34; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11-12; 21:12; John 9:13-34; Acts 22:19).[18]

In early Judaism such "assembly" of Israel would also be known as the "called out" or "church." Stephen considered that during the Exodus, Moses was with Israel as "the called out," but that Israel was repeatedly rebellious (Acts 7:38). David called all Israel to assemble to witness the moving of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chr 13:2, 4). David and other kings called all Israel to gather at the tabernacle/temple in worship (including sacrifices) and to praise Yahweh with temple singers and trumpets sounding (1 Chr 29:1, 20; 2 Chr 1:3,5; 6:3). Jehoshaphat prayed to Yahweh before all Israel in the

17. Eric M. Meyers and Mark A. Chancey, *Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible,* Vol 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 204-238.

18. Jordan J. Ryan, *The Role of the Synagogue in the Aims of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 49-50.

temple and the Spirit came down upon Levites to foster prophecy (2 Chr 20:5, 14). All Israel celebrated Passover in the temple with the king (2 Chr 30:2, 13, 23-25). Wisdom was shared in the assembly. Ezra and all Israel confessed their sin weeping in the temple. A judgment seat was set up in the temple assembly.

Jesus announced his kingdom message in synagogues by reading from the scroll, such as Isaiah 61, and identifying in his teaching that the kingdom miracles anticipated are being realized in his healing ministry (Luke 4:16-21). He demonstrated his kingdom authority by healing all who sought him, even on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-28; 3:1-5). Unfortunately, at times, the synagogue audience and elders rejected this message and Jesus's authority, because they held a restricted "bound" Shammai Pharisaic view restricting Sabbath healing, and considered Jesus to be dangerous in leading people astray (Matt 9:14-37; Luke 4:22-29). Jewish leadership killed Jesus and put others out of their synagogues as "bound" (John 9:34; 12:42).[19] Those who followed Jesus became his disciples, later called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Christians developed synagogues or churches aligned with Jesus (James 2:2). The Church was seen by Christ as a universal gathering of believers aligned with Him, growing up to be his community and kingdom, to take captive those bound by sin (Matt 13:30-33, 41-43; 16:16-18).The core message that Jesus is Messiah serves as the point of inclusion as "loosed" unto kingdom (Matt 16:19; 18:18).

Local churches make up the universal Church and may meet in a patron's house (1 Cor 1:2; 16:19; Acts 16:15). There are no known church buildings of the first century, but, as churches grew, they built buildings which they called churches. First-century

19. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Library of Alexandria: Project Gutenberg), 18.64.

Christian liturgy includes modifications of synagogue practices including communal filling by the Spirit; apostolic teachings of Jesus's message; singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; gratitude to God in Jesus's name; mutual submission to each other; sharing for edification; and admonishing one another (Eph 5:18-21; 1 Cor 6:4; 14:26).

As synagogues celebrate the God of the Exodus, so churches celebrate a communal meal of the Lord's Supper commemorating Jesus's new covenant initiated in his death and proclaiming his coming and his kingdom (1 Cor 11:18, 22; Acts 2:42). This communal meal was a simple example of church generosity to meet all the needs of any vulnerable who identify within the community (Acts 2:43-46; 4:34-37; 6:1-6). As in synagogues, elders oversaw the church with prayer, teaching, leading, correcting and restoring fellow believers (Acts 15:22; 20:17, 28). Within the leadership of the churches, the Holy Spirit gifted ministers and ministries growing the churches to be like Christ (Eph 4:11-13; 1 Cor 12:4-31). By the end of the first century there were designated "messengers" or teaching elders for churches, who would lead the reading and teaching for church Sunday worship (1 Tim 5:17).[20]

More could be said about the church but this much shows that such Christian church gatherings extended from Jewish synagogues, which themselves localized Jewish temple and gate practice within each community. As such, church extends the effort to foster vibrant spiritual life where Christians live.[21] And so today, a theological and biblical perspective should influence any building project in this post-millennial Western culture or in the world. God shared with his chosen people regulations for worship during

20. Kennard, "The Roots and Effect of Synagogue on Church."

21. Ibid.

the old covenant dispensation, and Jesus's life, death, and resurrection established new freedoms, under grace, in the new covenant. The body of the believer became the living sanctuary, empowered and infused by the Holy Spirit, providing new possibilities for worship and ministry space as a result.

A Biblical Perspective on Sacred Spaces

It is said that a people who are unaware of their history are doomed to make similar mistakes. The prophet Haggai chronicles the actions of the Jewish exiles who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. Haggai was motivated by a solitary question: How can the devastated temple be rebuilt? According to his prophetic cohort, Ezra, his success was a reflection of his ability to motivate the Jews through his preaching (Ezra 6:14). Even more so were the confronting words of Yahweh. Efforts to build God's house were initiated but interrupted and forgotten. The land that was previously sterile, reversed itself under God's favor when the work of building and the faith and hope of the people was rekindled.[22] Once prosperity returned, the people focused on building their own abodes, accumulating wealth, and advancing agricultural pursuits, abandoning the priority to rebuild God's temple. The prophetic warning to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest, was to consider their ways. Their efforts to prosper their own lives while the temple lay in ruins would be thwarted until the temple was rebuilt, faith was evidenced, and God was honored there. Once priorities had been put in proper order, the presence of the Lord among them would

22. Zec 8:9–11; John Calvin, *Zechariah*, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, translated by John Owens, vol. 5 (1849): 202–10. NOTE: All biblical quotes and abbreviations are taken from the New International Version except where specifically indicated.

be evident and prosperity would return.[23] Is this a warning to those who hold to the Judeo-Christian faith? As the missional movement seeks to reexamine the actions of God in a technologically perceptive, increasingly humanistic, faith-challenging world, have the saints neglected the temple and left it in ruins? Some digression provides further clarity.

Does one actually need church buildings in the twenty-first century to honor God? This question, posed by Mark Searle in "Sacred Places," suggests that in an absolute sense, one does not.[24] Of principal importance is that worshippers assemble, which presumes a place, and it remains true that faith continually influences lives and convictions seek expression in the places inhabited.

Beginning from the time of the first deliverance of the children of Israel from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, to the establishment of a Jewish nation, to the rise and fall of Jerusalem, history suggests the yearning was there. From the call and assembling of the disciples on seashores, preaching and teaching from a borrowed boat or welcoming homes, and even mountainside classrooms, the need was there. From the first Pentecost of Acts 2, to the temples, chapels, cathedrals, strip malls, outdoor amphitheaters, private homes, and all the various sacred and communal gathering spaces around the world, the seekers of God have contemplated a space to worship and encounter the living God. None has escaped this instinctual desire for a place to dwell, reflect, release, and find centering, guidance, and protection.

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23. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 35; Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai: A Commentary*, Continental Commentary Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 19, 22; John Calvin, *Haggai*, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, translated by John Owens, vol. 4, (1846): 335–40.

24. Mark Searle, "Sacred Places," *Assembly* 10, no. 2 (1983): 226.

The first covenantal nomadic tribes of Israel grew into a nation of monotheistic people, united by their connection and identity with an omnipotent, omniscient, border-crossing, unstoppable, scandalously loving God, who had extended himself into the affairs of his beloved. With a jealous love that called for obedience and sacrifice, he offered personal communion during an extended, transformative road trip to a holy mountain. According to Ex 19, the desert and Mt. Sinai became the destined place for worship.

The second covenant that established the early church of Jesus Christ experienced the need for sacred space for the perfecting of the people of the Way. Their lifestyle would be impacted by a belief that engulfed their spiritual, emotional, physical, social, and political ethos, redefining their human experience.

What theological forces created the need for a house of faith? Quite simply, God initiated the conversation. His instructions to Moses were "[M]ake a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them" (Ex 25:8). He planned the construction of the first earthly sanctuary to honor him and receive his people. In addition, the instructions, design, and building materials were specific (Ex 25).

God invited his chosen people to participate in worship through experiencing his abiding presence, voluntarily giving, as an act of worship, and being intentional in their obedience:

> The Lord said to Moses: "Tell everyone in Israel who wants to give gifts that they must bring them to you. Here is a list of what you are to collect: Gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and red wool; fine linen; goat hair; tanned ram skins; fine leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the lamp; sweet-smelling spices to mix with the incense and with the oil for dedicating the tent and ordaining the priests; and onyx stones and other gems for the sacred vest and the breastpiece. I also want them to build a special place where I can live among my people. Make it and its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." (Ex 25:1–9, CEV)

Every item, color, aroma, and texture somehow linked itself to the original heavenly tabernacle. The full mystery of its significance had not yet been revealed to humankind. The acknowledgement, however, that a physical structure held a symbolic, sacred, and necessary presence to assist these embodied spirits in the journey to comprehension of true fellowship with the Creator God, was his plan. Each person was invited to participate voluntarily, and New Testament writings confirm God's desire that worshippers make intentional steps toward him. 2 Co 9:7 states, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." The work would be accomplished only by those whose hearts were moved to active involvement and concern.

The earthly tabernacle or wilderness tent-shrine was constructed to assist the people of God in transitioning from a people under captivity to a people of freedom. Here, they would be instructed on how to approach a holy God and be forgiven of sin, with symbolic implications for a future dispensation of grace. It is clear that only God can provide the detail appropriate for the worship of God and the presence of Almighty God who chose to dwell among the people. The criteria for divine worship are not fundamentally a matter of human innovation or effort. God is the architect, giver of the specifications for construction, and bestower of the divine Spirit required to inspire the artisans and builders.[25] The temporary mobile structure consisted of two courts—an outer courtyard and an inner court or tabernacle, the latter of which consisted of an outer and an inner compartment. The sanctuary, in its furnishings and sacrificial arrangements,

25. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 265.

proclaimed its own temporary character, the principles of which held equally relevant for both Solomon's and Herod's temple.[26]

The outer courtyard walls were constructed of woven linen, attached to bronze-overlaid acacia wood poles with bronze bases, each standing ten cubits or about fifteen feet (Ex 26:15-30). There was one entry gate, and a curtain twenty cubits long adorned with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn embroidered into finely twisted linen (Ex 26:36-37). The furnishings included a bronze altar for receiving sacrifices (Ex 27:1-8) and a bronze laver with a polished, mirrored basin for the priests to cleanse (Ex 30:17-21).

The inner court of the tabernacle housed three pieces of furniture (Ex 25:23-40; Heb 9:2). The entrance was demarcated by another colorfully adorned blue, purple, and scarlet curtain constructed of twisted linen. Upon entry, to the left was a solid, one-piece lampstand of hammered gold, with a central branch and six others, resembling an almond tree. To the right, one would find a table of showbread, made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, upon which were placed twelve loaves of bread, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, switched out weekly for fresh loaves (Ex 25:23-30; 26:35). Straight ahead, standing in front of the veil to the Holy of Holies, was a golden altar of incense, with the incense to be burned continuously (Ex 30:1-10). From this incense, a golden censer was filled for the priest to swing and carry into the Holy of Holies annually on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:12).

Within this sacred space was only one piece of furniture, an ark, made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold (Ex 26:31-33). A woven curtain adorned with cherubim shielded the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 36:35). The holy box was covered with

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26. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 198.

an atonement seat, fashioned of pure gold, with a cherubim on each end, facing each other and positioned with wings spread upward (Ex 37:1-9). This was known as the mercy seat, and here, the glory of God would manifest as a cloud on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:2). Successive temples, while more elaborate, preserved the same ground plan for the holy house, though additional courts may have been added.[27]

An interpretation of the symbolism suggested by the earthly tabernacle is best tied to the purpose of the structure and the initiative of God to restore and heal his people. For all of its noble ritual, beauty, and dignity, it was only a shadow, which could not succeed in its purpose. The only priest and only sacrifice capable of opening the way to God for all men and women is Jesus Christ.[28] In Heb 9:1–5, the writer recounts the construction, rooms, and furnishings of the earthly tabernacle in like fashion and detail to the Exodus account. Of equal importance, the subsequent verses reference the procedures for appropriate worship, highlighting the restricted and exclusive access of the priest to the holy places, never without blood, to be offered for his sins and those of the people of God. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This was an illustration for the present time with external regulations applying until the time of the new order. The pericope provides further explanation that when Christ came as high priest of the new covenant, releasing the Holy Spirit, now present as promised by the Father, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by human

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27. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 198; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 156–60.

28. William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 120.

hands. He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption for humankind.

> Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.
>
> When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.
>
> But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. (Heb 9:1–12)

In Lev 26:11-12, a sovereign God speaks saying, "I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." This scripture is an early proclamation of the coming of God in the flesh, in the person of Jesus, his son. Recalling the words from the Johannine text, Jesus later declared, "Destroy the temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (Jn 2:19). After Christ was crucified and rose from the dead, his disciples remembered his words, believed, and knew that he was speaking of his body as the new temple, a new and more intimate form of meeting place between the divine and the human, ultimately replacing

the physical sanctuary. It is in the death of Christ, and the resurrection three days later, that Jesus met the needs of humanity and reconciled them to God, becoming the temple or superior meeting place between God and sinners.

On the Day of Pentecost, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit, mentioned in the book of Joel, enters the disciples of Christ, empowering them to become the new temples (Acts 2:1–5). Peter, in his first sermon, bears witness to the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of men. Paul, in his first letter to the Church in Corinth, questions the early church, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? . . . God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple" (1 Co 3:16,17). Paul would later proclaim in his second epistle to the Corinthian church that "We are the temple of the living God" (2 Co 6:16). With that understanding, new possibilities emerged for sacred spaces to be reimagined, not as buildings, but as living stones, gathering, seeking, and communing with each other, to encounter a living God desirous of walking through life with his creation. The earthly tabernacle models and, perhaps, prophetically announces this point. For example, the outer court, with its bronze-covered poles and furnishings, represents the physical body, contaminated and impure through contact with the world (bronze being an alloy of copper, tin, and other elements). This in juxtaposed to the gold-overlaid articles found in the Holy Place and the pure gold of the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies.

The activity and items of the outer court represent personal sacrifice, prayerful reflection, and mental cleansing before coming nearer to God's presence. "Present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, this is your true and proper worship. For through Christ, the saints are washed with water through the Word" (Ro

12:1; Eph 5:25-26). The Holy Place, with the lampstand, table of showbread, and incense altar, speak to the mind or soulish part of who humanity is. First and purposefully, the only true light within the structure is the lampstand, representing the Word that is a light unto the pathway. All instruction, direction, and vision come from the Creator as source. As Ps 119:105 proclaims, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." Without the Word, humanity is blind to its potential and Kingdom status. Secondly, the showbread offers acknowledgement that through benevolence, all must be prompted to give what is decided in their own hearts to give, willingly and cheerfully, for it is a sacrifice that pleases God" (Heb 13:16). Weekly, the tribes of Israel participated in an act of inclusion, service, and charity, providing fresh loaves of bread for the tabernacle, later to be eaten by the priest on duty. The contemporary church continues this practice with monetary contributions to be used for provisions necessary for the work. Third, the lives of the saints are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God, and these prayers are a sweet aroma unto the Lord that should be unceasing, like the burning incense (2 Th 5:17; Rev 5:8).

There is another structural approach to consider. Christ purifies the heavenly temple as in the day of Atonement (Heb 9:19-28), purifying the conscience with everlasting forgiveness (Heb 10:1-2, 14-18), inviting believers into intimacy with God within corporate holy place as all priests (Heb 10:19-25). With the corporate people being the new covenant temple, what does this do to structures of the church gathered (the assembly)? One could bring about broad changes, such as the focus on worship at the altar through the eucharist (Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican view), to a focus on proclaiming the Word (Protestant denominations), to a focus on community life and

edification (as in the Renewal Movement of the 1960-70s). These transitions set up missionalism.

If the church is seriously concerned about engaging the world and living out the gospel, then its buildings should reflect the accessibility to Jesus. Peter Cavanagh, a priest deeply involved in current projects for the design of church buildings that are missional, suggests that what is needed is a radically thought out building that seeks to call both the gathered Christian community within its walls and the non-Christian community outside to a new awareness of God's love.[29]

It is into this post-millennial era that the church is charged to reexamine its presentation of the message of the Kingdom in creative, yet authentic ways. As director of the art and architecture department at the Office for Divine Worship in the Archdiocese of Chicago, Father J. Philip Horrigan poses some intriguing questions along this line. Did current theological references and statements shape the structure, or did the architectural style and arrangement of space shape theological concepts and ritual patterns? What political forces, both civil and ecclesial, were influential in the building of churches? And, what, if any, influence or collaboration was there between the members of the local church and the leadership that directed the project? Perhaps, as he suggests, the process is more of a contemporary concern. The theologies and the architectural responses did not carry the same weight throughout successive eras.[30]

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29. J. Philip Horrigan, "Sacred Space, Temple of the Divine and Human: Part 1, Church Buildings through the Ages," *Liturgical Ministry* 14 (Winter 2005): 8-14. Accessed January 23, 2014. ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0001582724).

30. Searle, "Sacred Places," 226.

Each generation has a need to examine the potential the building offers as an aid to the Christian community in living out the social teachings of Jesus. Big things emerge from small beginnings. A building project may begin as something as unimaginative as a bathroom or toilet. Visitors and members unwilling to use the facilities because of the tight-fitting stalls or stained commodes that sit too low, can eventually increase the outcry from the congregation to build a "decent" washroom. This concern is useful as it may lead to a desire to be better hosts or inspire leaders to continue with other projects, such as the installation of a fully functioning kitchen. The spirit of hospitality may overflow to providing an emergency shelter or the feeding of the homeless.[31] The leadership ought to let the flames of hospitality burn and encourage the people to give so the life of Christ will be made evident.

From a biblical perspective, it seems clear that the question to build or not build a place of worship in the twenty-first century hinges on the understanding that the body of the believers is indeed the representative temple, established by Jesus Christ. Yet, humanity is inspired by the symbols of the faith, and they express their adoration for a holy God through the construction of sacred spaces that invite others in to experience the love of God. So then, to build is an act of worship, and not to build is to acknowledge the temporary reality of man's existence in the earth. Both points of view honor God.

Current Trends and Practical Perspectives on Sacred Space

Theological references, in the context of the missional movement and structures that house ecclesiastical activity, point to the healing and restoration of humankind. A

31. Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent: Re-ordering the Church Building for Worship and Mission* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 129.

story of God's redemptive work is continually being lived out in the intentionality of human work, play, rest, fellowship, and learning environments. A church facility contributes to the telling of that story, but not all hearts and minds are clear on the subject of building, not building, repurposing, or even seeking sacred spaces. Dissenting voices still speak out. While the facilities will not save a person from destructive, sinful, marginal living, the lack of attention to those things that invite and attract can serve as roadblocks to reaching those people who need to hear the gospel message the most. Church buildings, if constructed, must convey who the church is, what she believes and values, and with whom she wants to share and invite along the journey. The church is not the building, but a building is where the church meets. The late C. S. Cowles, known author, professor of Bible and theology at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California, and Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) of the University of San Francisco Theological Seminary, opined a similar conclusion.

Cowles acknowledges the voices of church conservatives wishing to avoid investing time and money in property and buildings, when scarcity of financial resources appears less urgent than meeting people's needs, such as caring for the orphans or feeding the hungry. His theology draws him back to Haggai's message about God's call to rebuild the temple (Hag 1:1–15). Cowles perceives that the sole reason for a church building is to provide a community center for God's people—a place to be in God's presence together: to worship, learn, break bread, celebrate, and serve the homeless and destitute. "We glorify God not only by the purity of our lives and the quality of our

service, but also by the attention we give to the visible symbols of His presence among us."[32]

Church buildings are tools that church leaders use to shepherd in and to gather God's people. They are integral pieces in God's mission of building his Kingdom. With intentionality, they can be extremely pragmatic in function, dual use, flow, circulation, and seating.[33] Lowe studied the work of Sir John Betjeman, a modern English poet, writer, and broadcaster, who expressed his love of the church architecture common to his homeland. Betjeman noted that the "aesthetic" elements of Christianity were useful in helping him approach and frame the issues that troubled him in life. His love of church architecture, appreciation of the beauty of the building, and the community of believers whose labor created it, signified a sharing of their faith, not as just a museum of showpieces, but as a living thing—still in use.[34] More importantly, Betjeman suggested that the church is, and always has been, a place where people have come to mark out the defining events in their lives. The church is a focal point for the community in the midst of a changing world, providing spiritual continuity to the faithful, and unknowingly, to the faithless.[35]

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32. C. S. Cowles, "The Temple Reflecting God's Design," *The Church Construction Kit: A Complete Project Guide for Church Building Programs* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2006), 17–20.

33. Tim Cool, *Why Church Buildings Matter: The Story of Your Space* (Nashville: Rainer Publishing, 2013), 4–5, 16–17.

34. Peter J. Lowe, "The Church as a Building and the Church as a Community in the Work of John Betjeman," *Christianity and Literature* 57, no. 4 (Sum 2008): 561–3, accessed Jan 23, 2014. ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0001685951).

35. Ibid., 563.

While this view may be considered modern to a poet (Betjeman) who lived from 1906 to 1984, by 2013, newer voices of the faithful continue to challenge the world's changing Christian landscape. New church planters, like Pastor Mike Connaway and his VLife Church, embody a more moderate worldview. This youthful, nondenominational pastor and congregation embraced a new church home in a vacant Trinity Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest church buildings in McKinney, Texas. The Pastor asserted that the old building reminded them of a time when life was not broken. The Collin County Historic Preservation Group protected the neglected church building from being condemned by the city. Pastor Connaway bought the building, made renovations with the help of his family, and restored it to useful service by 2014. It is now a flowering ministry with open, welcoming worship, Bible teaching, community involvement, and outreach.[36] It was the same song with a slightly different melody, so to speak. The Pastor spoke of how young worshipers want authenticity, so the building matters. Even though VLife is contemporary, the nineteenth-century pews and vintage light fixtures are important connections to tradition and heritage.

Again, church buildings are tools that church leaders use to shepherd in and to gather God's people. Massive shifting populations from the cities to the suburbs, and from rural to metropolitan areas, have forced church leaders from all denominations to ponder what to do with former sanctuaries. Transitions that maintain a sense of purpose and capture new energy, while retaining mission, have birthed many instances of imaginative conversions. For instance, the former Heights United Presbyterian Church in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, converted to the Heights Youth Club, offering summer and

36. Collin McKinney, "The History of VLife Church" (February 6, 2018), accessed July 22, 2019, 2019, https://nearsay.com/c/436151/345340/the-history-of-vlife-church.

after-school activities promoting education, recreation, and the arts. While a secular program, it fits with church goals of nurturing young people.[37]

This pendulum of whether to have a church building or not swings in both directions. Viewing a church building from a theological perspective, rather than a liturgical one, offers additional options and freedoms. Pastor David Newman of Antioch Church in a northern suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio, began holding services at the Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio. Initially, this location was intended to be temporary space until the congregation could afford to build a permanent facility. A shift, however, came about in the mindset of the pastor and the people. Antioch recognized the YMCA as a mission field and decided to stay. For a modest fee, the church now sees more than 8,000 people a day walking the halls in the place where they minister. The YMCA attracts a host of nonbelievers every day with a demographic representative of a wide cross-section of the area's population. The church meets in the gym, and during the week, the church members have opportunities to teach classes, serve on the board, coach athletic teams, and be a missional presence in the community.[38] The building matters, but more importantly, the mission of God's redemptive work to humankind, healing and restoring, must take precedence for the church to be the church.

37. David Briggs, "New Life for Old Church Buildings," *Christian Century* 124, no. 19 (Sept. 18, 2007): 14, accessed Jan. 23, 2014, ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0001607587).

38. Brandon O'Brien, "Missional to the Max: Three Traditional Churches Change Course by Putting their Money (as Well as their Buildings and People) Where their Mission Is." *Leadership Journal* 29, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 29–32, accessed January 23, 2014.

Practical Foundations of Leadership

Prepared to Build: The Sacred Space

Stephen Anderson, in *Preparing to Build*, offers an insightful definition for the work. He says, "Being prepared to build . . . means the church has objectively quantified as many of the variables as possible and developed a building strategy within the financial ability of the church.[39] Building a church facility is exciting, exhausting, expensive, and extremely time consuming for a pastor and building committee. From the outset of his book, Anderson frames Chapter 1 around the notion of making decisions for the spending of thousands of dollars in an objective process—knowing what is needed to build and why, what the church can afford to build, how it will be paid for, where to build, and when to build. He opines that a church, which is ready to build, articulates, through factual analysis, what it needs in the present and in the future, understands the cost of construction, measures its financial health and ability, and knows that the vision can be completed on the property chosen.[40]

For an African Methodist Episcopal Church, the denominational mission can be found in its book of *Doctrine and Discipline*. The mission is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through work and deed. Every level of the church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the

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39. Stephen Anderson, *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Experienced Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program*, 3rd ed. (Clayton, NC: Anderson Marketing, Inc., 2011).

40. Ibid.

denomination evolved. Specifically, activities involved and emphasized are: to seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy through a continuing program of: 1) preaching the gospel, 2) feeding the hungry, 3) clothing the naked, 4) housing the homeless, 5) cheering the fallen, 6) providing jobs for the jobless, 7) administering to the need of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums and mental institutions, senior citizens' homes, caring for the sick, the shut-in, the mentally and socially disturbed, and 8) encouraging thrift and economic advancement.[41] For the missional church, other creative ways of engaging the world exist. The message is the same, though the method by which it is delivered may be novel.

The people of the local congregation determine the vision or mission made manifest. The community it inhabits and the spiritual gifting available within the church and among its friends and colleagues who are willing to participate in the work, influence those decisions. The Right Reverend Harry L. Seawright, a current bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, developed a short, six-item questionnaire to assist in shaping a vision statement (Appendix D). The vision is then shared and adopted by the majority of the congregation, after which it is used to guide the pastor in facilitating the church leadership in formulating the building needs, goals, objectives, and standards.[42] Selecting a site for construction ideally allows for ease of access for a neighboring subdivision and can be pre-selected by quitclaim deed from existing holdings within the denomination, as was the case with Visions. The Building Committee, at its core,

41. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2016* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, The Compilation Committee, 2017), 23.

42. Harry L. Seawright, *More than Bricks and Mortar: Building a Church Without Losing Your Mind* (Washington, DC: The Congress of National Black Churches, 1996), 9–10.

involved members from the Official Board, to include representatives from the Trustee and Steward Boards, and at least one member from all other major auxiliaries and ministries. Duties for this group included the selection of an architect, feasibility and demographic studies, and construction of a sound financial proposal for prospective lenders.

Any goals that a congregation expects to be fulfilled in brick, mortar, and glass should be considered as follows. First, while church people enjoy doing many things, most often together, they must worship, teach, and learn to be sincerely considered a gathering of the people of God. Second, worship, teaching, and learning are done with more regularity than all other activities. As a caution, those requiring nursery and daycare needs today will not require the same in the next ten to fifteen years, so, futuristically, changes in patterns of education and worship may render permanent structures obsolete. Providing the most flexible floor space and equipment is of paramount importance for new construction. The moods of both the present and the imagined future need to be interpreted realistically in the building with the widest variety of circumstances and educational techniques being considered.[43]

The decision for multi-use space and sacred space in co-existence no longer garners great resistance as in times past. Many are beginning to sense possibility and optimism in the renewed use of sacred spaces. Issues related to the environment and diversity of purpose, the economy, possible rental of space when not in use during the week, and the congregation's specific preferences, have encouraged parishioners to use

43. Lloyd E. Sheneman, "Educational Buildings: Building for Flexibility," *Lutheran Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (February 1968): 78–82, accessed January 23, 2014, ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0000712741).

their space well, both for money and for mission. Donna Schaper, in an article entitled "To Pew, or Not to Pew, That is the Question," explains that people still want to sit in sanctuaries and large meeting rooms—they just want to sit in different ways, in different-sized groups, and in individual chairs. Stewardship, the right use of resources on behalf of the deepest mission, draws congregants to avoid any waste.[44]

Prepared to Build: The People

Leadership is about leading people. Disciplines of vision-casting, strategic development, maximization of human resources, adaptation to change, and appropriate execution of new directions are but a few of the essential leadership activities engaged to produce desired results. In his book, *Boundaries for Leaders*, Henry Cloud illuminates the idea that no matter how great a vision or strategy, the leader must get it done with and through people. Leaders can motivate or de-incentivize those whom they guide. How they lead people and build cultures are what make vision and strategy work or falter. Acceptance of certain realities affects outcomes (e.g., how biological realities can affect a person's cognition, executive function, mentation, physical response, and emotions). Adjusting for realities such as these can provide opportunities for compassion and shifting of duties, allowing others to thrive.

Boundary-setting or providing a structure, determining what will exist and what will not, is transformative, both in people's personal lives and in the life of the organizations in which they have a role. Boundaries are the property lines that define ownership, control, and responsibility by limiting behavior and activity. By taking charge

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44. Donna Schaper, "To Pew, or Not to Pew, That Is the Question," *Congregations* 39, no. 3 (2012): 14–17, accessed January 23, 2014, ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0001911879).

and helping people focus and attend to what is important, while rejecting what is toxic and unimportant, a leader is pivotal in shaping a desired church culture throughout the growth and building processes. Shaping the ministries that will develop cohesion with the people of the community in the new location provides engagement, collaboration, and attraction for current members. A necessity for success is building a performance-fueling, emotional climate that is devoid of energy-stealing stress. It is crucial to facilitate teams that are deeply connected and facilitating positive, optimistic thinking patterns among God's people. Knowing how to assist people in managing behaviors that they can control and that bring focused results produces high-performance teams that achieve and enhance any successful organizational culture. This begins with the leader modeling the behaviors ardently desired.[45] The weekly sermon and mid-week message, along with focused Bible study and church school curriculum, provide opportunities that must not be overlooked and that should be maximized to shape the congregational team.

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, in their book The Missional Leader, suggest that the enormous changes across the culture require that the church rethink its attitudes and habits and begin to embrace fresh thinking about developing experiments among the community of the faithful. The Missional Change Model is one such experiment that makes certain assumptions about the nature of change within congregations and denominations in which missional concepts have been introduced. New construction presents an atmosphere suitable for the introduction of new and creative ways to share the gospel message of love to a receiving community. This model introduces five key

45. Henry Cloud, *Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being Ridiculously in Charge* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013).

concepts beginning with awareness but then moving to the four-fold understand, evaluation, trial, and commit.[46]

With forty years of investigative research in anthropology and sociology, Everett Rogers, author of *Diffusion of Innovations*, provides key support for the Missional Change Model's construct. Rogers's theory offers an explanatory pattern for the dispersion of new ideas among people groups.[47] He suggests four main elements that influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system. Innovation embodies an idea, practice, or project perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. An obstacle to the adoption of innovations, uncertainty is just accepted.[48] The second element of the diffusion of innovation is communication channels, which represents the process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. A channel is the means by which a message gets from the source to the receiver. Interpersonal channels are the most powerful to create or change strong attitudes held by individuals.[49] The time dimension in diffusion research is one of the strengths of the innovation-diffusion process, as it is often overlooked in behavioral research. Rogers defines the final element, a social system, as a set of interrelated units engaging jointly in problem solving to accomplish a common goal. The social system is influenced by the social structure or the patterned arrangements of the units in a system.[50] The innovation-

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46. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 61.

47. Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003).

48. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 12, 46.

49. Ibid., 5, 19, 204.

50. Ibid., 23, 24, 172.

decision process, successfully done, involves knowledge or previous practice; persuasion, with time to build confidence in the change; decision, implementation, or experimentation; and confirmation. The Missional Leader adds reinforcement to the fifth stage—confirmation.[51] The Missional Change Model takes these five stages and applies them to the social system of the local church being transitioned into a missional community.[52]

The Congregational Transformation Model presented in *Leading Congregational Change* by Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, is important to mention at this point. This is a three-dimensional model that includes spiritual and relational vitality, an eight-stage process for change, and four essential learning disciplines.

Congregations that are lacking in spiritual vitality are unable to sustain any meaningful change and are the reason why spiritual and relational vitality is the central component of this transformational model. The process of change is just as important as the destination. Needful in the making of personal preparation are emotional maturity, integrity, and having a set of guiding principles that establish limits on behavior. This stage is followed by creating urgency and generating the energy for change, establishing a diverse vision community, discerning the vision and determining the vision path, communicating the vision, empowering change leaders, implementing the vision, and reinforcing momentum through alignment. The third component is more organic and represents a set of learning disciplines. The discipline of creative tension stands between

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51. Roxburgh and Romanuk. *The Missional Leader*, 82.

52. The scope of this project was focused on the leading of a congregation in the building of a family life center for missional activities, as it revitalizes an aging subdivision in Houston. The designation as a missional community had not yet been determined.

where and who one is, or current reality, and where one wants to be (a vision of the future). Living in the tension is a necessity in this time of continuous change. Beliefs and thoughts about how the world works, which are mostly subconscious, represent mental models that occasionally require reevaluation. Team learning maximizes the increased productivity of the group over the capability of the individuals. Finally, a working knowledge of systems thinking facilitates interaction with congregations as spiritual and human social systems.[53]

While the time dimension is an advantage in the Missional Change Model, the spiritual and relational components comprise the appeal of the Congregational Transformation Model. The flexibility of application for newly planted congregations, parachurch organizations, cell groups, as well as older, established congregations, may provide additional incentive for its use. For the purpose of this work, the congregation of Visions demonstrates vitality, engagement, maturity, and spiritual alertness. Their commitment to each other and those outside their fellowship did not suggest that transformation was required regarding their spiritual and relational attitudes. The Missional Change Model, attractive because of its simplicity and ease of remembrance of the steps, added to its teachability for this congregation.

Avenues already in place for disseminating information and exchange of ideas within the four walls of most Christian churches include the church school, Bible studies, and the preaching moment. It is important to reiterate at this point that missional church involves God's mission in the world, not management advice to accomplish personal or

53. Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for The Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 12–17.

professional church agendas. Forward movement involves rediscovering church identity as people sent by God into the world as gospel witnesses.[54]

As spiritual erosion has been noted in society, so the body of Christ shows evidence of this infection. Contemporary culture lends ample confusion as to who and what the church represents—declines in church attendance and church growth, missing members from millennials and generations X, Y, and Z, megachurches with ease of disconnect between congregants and lack of accountability to spiritual leadership, a smorgasbord of views and beliefs, etc.

The church was called into existence to align with the mission of Christ in the world and to remember that God's initiative to restore and heal humankind was being executed. Jesus left the church with the commission to spread and communicate the message of the Kingdom of God. Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, the mission of the church has been to collaborate and participate with the ongoing work of redemption in the world. In recent years, leaders have been called upon to help churches realign with the original purpose.

Refocusing the church's understanding of God in the world requires readjusting the way the church functions as the body of Christ, bending mindsets of Christ-followers back to God's intended design. As that re-conception takes shape, the venue or sacred spaces where that mission is carried out requires reassessment. The missional movement, reimagining the actions of God in a tech savvy, humanistic, environmentally sensitive world, must answer the question—is a house of faith needed? God commanded Moses to

54. J. Todd Billings, "What Makes a Church Missional? Freedom from Cultural Captivity Does Not Mean Freedom from Tradition," *Christianity Today* 52, no. 3 (March 2008): 56–9, accessed February 19, 2013, ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (0001638407).

build the earthly sanctuary with intentionality. Haggai admonished the people to consider their ways, to repair the ruins of the temple after it was destroyed, thereby showing their faithfulness to God who brought them out of captivity. Then Jesus came, lived among humanity, met needs, died on a cross, and was resurrected three days later, reconciling those who followed him to God, becoming the superior meeting place between God and sinners, and sending the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul recognized that humanity in faith relationships with Christ had become the temple of the living God (1 Cor 3:16) and new possibilities continued to emerge for sacred spaces to worship—not just for physical buildings but for living stones (1 Pet 2:5), anywhere they gather, seeking and communing with each other and the living God. Being missional in the twenty-first century considers radically, thought-out buildings that seek to call both the gathered Christian community within its four walls and the non-Christian community outside of them, to experience power encounters with a loving God.

Prepared to Build: The Pastor

No group shapes and influences a congregation's health, efficiency, and growth more than church leaders. A leader is a person who leads other people to a defined purpose. Before beginning a growth project as monumental as a building project, maximizing the emotional maturity of the leadership, including the pastor, is paramount. The essence of who each leader is affects how that leader functions. Performing in a world showing signs of societal regression and riddled with anxiety and anxious people, leaders cannot allow their anxiety to affect their thinking, actions, or decisions. Anxiety is how one reacts when working between compliance and control. When an individual feels threatened by the actions of others, he or she, in turn, often reacts in a pre-patterned way.

The threat may be the challenge to surrender part of one's personhood or to submit, unwillingly, to someone who is trying to dominate. If feeling ignored and overlooked, not included, or not being listened to, physiologic responses can result. Real or perceived, science suggests that patterns of reactivity develop in childhood. Self-discovery is a learned practice that will lend insight into self, facilitating a more informed process while leading. What is desired is for extraordinary leadership to guide persons toward particular goals, mission, and purpose.

Roberta M. Gilbert, author of several books, including *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory* and *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*, is a psychiatrist practicing in Falls Church, Virginia. She serves on the faculty of The Bowen Center for the Study of Human Systems, whose mission "is to lead the development of Bowen family systems theory into a science of human behavior and to assist individuals, families, communities, and organizations in solving major life problems through understanding and improving human relationships."[55] A student of Murray Bowen, the originator of the family systems theory, she has observed the transformational effect of systems thinking and the benefits of its use to positively impact families and leaders. She provides leadership training to pastors and managers, with the aim of reversing the decline of societal regression, but in a less clinical, more didactic approach.[56]

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55. The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, accessed Dec. 15, 2019, http://www.thebowencenter.org/.

56. Roberta Gilbert, The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, accessed Dec. 15, 2019, http://thebowencenter.org/roberta-gilbert/.

Bowen theory, as explained by Gilbert, focuses on emotional or interactive patterns that develop in a family as a means of defusing anxiety.[57] The goal of the theory is two-fold: primarily, to make one aware that there is an emotional system at play and to facilitate observation of its function, and, secondly, to increase differentiation of self, thereby promoting emotional maturity and change in the individual as opposed to focusing on change in others. Eight interlocking theories comprise Bowen family systems theory. These concepts include specific ideologies and nomenclature.[58] Brief descriptions will follow as a way to reveal the multi-faceted nature of the theory and the benefits to leaders.

Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST)

The primary characteristics of BFST is the differentiation of self scale. Differentiation of self refers to the primal desire to be an individual, even while seeking togetherness or fusion within a family unit. Fusion, the opposing concept, describes one's option to sacrifice individual choices and distinctions in order to facilitate harmony within the family. It describes each person's reactions within a relationship or in connection with others, remembering that anxiety develops largely because of too much

57. Roberta M. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making A Difference* (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 19-20.

58. Michael Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1988).

closeness or too much distancing while maintaining contact. The more differentiated an individual the greater the emotional maturity.[59]

The Nuclear Family Emotional System is a concept that describes four relationship patterns that govern where problems develop in a family that is not well-differentiated. During periods of stress or heightened reactivity, these observable patterns in the family encounters are dependent upon the family's ability to adapt and the family's connection to social networks and extended family. They are particularly evident when there is chronic anxiety. The four typical patterns that emerge with anxiety in relationships are marital conflict, dysfunction in one's spouse (overfunctioning or underfunctioning), impairment of one or more focused children or triangling, and emotional distance. Emotional distancing is a pattern found in association with the other three and, overall, reduces the intensity within the relationship.[60]

Triangling, described as the smallest stable relationship units, is the basic "molecule" of an emotional system.[61] When one person is uncomfortable with the anxiety in a relationship of two, a third, usually unsuspecting, individual is drawn into the system, to either take sides or manage the anxiety in the original relationship. This, in effect, is the process of triangling. In periods of stress, this process feeds on itself, developing interlocking triangles throughout the emotional system. Triangles are frequent, commonly occurring facts of nature.

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59. Jenny Brown, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Practice: Illustration and Critique," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 20, no. 2 (1999): 94-95.

60. Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation: An Approach Based on Bowen Theory,* 163-168, 173 note.

61. Ibid., 135.

Moving a step beyond the anxiety experienced in couples, family projection process involves children developing symptoms carried over from a previous generation's unresolved anxiety within relationships. Family projection process involves sensitivities within relationship that appear to be heightened when parents project emotions onto their children. Symptoms include such behaviors as heightened need for approval or attention, difficulty adjusting to expectations, blaming oneself or others, thinking others are responsible for one's happiness or feeling responsible for others, and, impulsiveness during periods of stress, as opposed to being thoughtful or developing coping skills.[62] These observable processes should trigger one to consider or think about the theory in play.

Family projection process can reoccur naturally over multiple generations. This essentially is Bowen's concept of the multigenerational transmission process. Family members choose spouses who have similar levels of differentiation of self. As they raise their children, their attitudes, actions, moods, and principles help to shape the levels of differentiation during the lengthy period in which human offspring are dependent on their parents. Depending on sibling positioning and whether projection process had a significant or less impactful effect on a child, greater or lesser differentiation than the parents will result. This pattern is continuous in a family, such that a linear construct across multiple generations of a family line are observable, with some degree of predictability and increasing disparagements for the less differentiated siblings.[63] The key

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62. The Bowen Center, "Bowen Theory: Family Projection Process," accessed Jan. 8, 2013, http://www.thebowencenter.org/pages/ theory.html#four.

63. Peter Titelman, "A Clinical Format for Bowen Family Systems Therapy with Highly Reactive Couples: Bowen Theory in Clinical Practice" *Clinical Casebook of Couple Therapy* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2010), 114.

implication of this transmission process is the suggestion that the root cause of high levels of success in life and, conversely, problematic conditions, are the result of generations of functioning within the family.[64]

Emotional cutoff is the process that describes the emotional process in which people separate themselves physically and emotionally from the family unit. Bowen describes it as "the way people separate themselves from the past in order to start their lives in the present generation."[65] Cutoff is an emotional distancing that allows persons to manage the intensity of fusion or unresolved attachments between generations. Often considered as an escape from the family of origin, patterns of reactivity occurring during periods of stress are observed to be repeated. Immediate relief from the pressure of stressful circumstances may, in fact, be desirable. However, restoration of connection and purposeful differentiation of self is needed to effect change in reactivity patterns.

Based on the research of Walter Toman, the concept of sibling position describes characteristics of eldest, middle, and youngest siblings, as well as the only-child concept, and correlates this with the interactions that occur between the parents that either facilitates or hinders differentiation of the self in the family. Factoring in birthing position allowed for the development of a personality profile that, for example, suggests that the eldest children are more likely to become leaders, taking on positions of responsibility, while younger siblings are comfortable being cared for by others and being more dependent. Only-children are seen as more responsible and having greater access to

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64. The Bowen Center website.

65. Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc. 1994), 382.

adults, while middle children are seen as enjoying the flexibility of shifting between the poles of being responsible or dependent. The family's level of differentiation regulates how much these patterns manifest. The theory is also felt to be useful in predicting marital compatibility based on birthing order and the gender of siblings. Additionally, coupled with projection and differentiation, presumptive personality profiles can be formulated for past generations when real data is lacking.[66]

Emotional process in society describes how the other theories coalesce and play out in an anxiety-ridden society in regression. Bowen suggests that societal regression began after World War II, worsened in the 1950s, and has been rapidly intensifying since the 1960s. "Symptoms" of regression include increased crime and violence, increases in divorce, fostering a litigious atmosphere, racial polarization, epidemic drug abuse, unprincipled and unethical leadership practices, financial mismanagement, and insistence on personal rights and freedoms without regard for societal cost. Bowen observed chronic anxiety in society which he attributed to a decline in resources necessary for mankind to thrive on earth, for example, population explosion, decrease in raw goods and materials, increased pollution and defacing of the environment.[67] This reality presents a dismal picture of the world to which a scientist would look for answers to ameliorate the conditions of family and society. "When the family is subjected to chronic, sustained anxiety . . . it loses contact with intellectually determined principles . . . resort[ing] more and more to emotionally determined decisions to allay the anxiety of the moment."[68] The

66. Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, 385.

67. The Bowen Center website.

68. Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, 386.

consideration of seeing society as an emotional unit is a logical extension of Bowen theory, which opens the door for possible application to larger groups in society.

Clearly defining these eight interlocking theories is crucial to the preparation for clinical observation and application. BFST is best understood by experiencing it. "Thinking systems and observing process"[69] in an emotionally charged human system of people groups, like congregations, is better formulated after some rehearsal. Because the thinking is countercultural to a society trained on cause and effect logic, meaningful repetition and analysis are advantageous.

In general, BFST is a reminder that during a period of stress or when there is upset, if one key leader can remain calm or less anxious and relate well to the group, while remaining differentiated or self-defined, there will be a beneficial impact on the group as a whole.[70] Persons with lower levels of differentiation require more emotional support, which can be offered. As church systems are more or less differentiated as well, the better-differentiated members should be placed in positions of authority, while simultaneously encouraging underfunctioning members of the congregation to become more engaged.

Ronald Richardson states that better-differentiated people are more able to distinguish between cognitive or thought-guided responses based on factual input versus thinking that is based purely on emotion-driven reactivity.[71] Leaders, who work on self-differentiation by examining their families of origin and improving self, are capable of

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69. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making A Difference*, x-xvii, 1-16.

70. Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor* 102, Summer 2005, 389.

71. Ibid., 391.

injecting a calming influence into home, congregation, workplace, and society. Anxiety-ridden communities call for change. Gilbert affirms that anxiety interferes with reliable, logical thinking.[72] BFST, as a scientific theory, helps one better to understand human behavior and how to effect positive change across generations. Thus, the implementation of BFST can become an important aid to the building of leaders, who are set free to lead from a higher level of differentiation than previously and as a less-anxious, healthy participant in the body of believers to whom they are called.

Conclusion

Inspired by the symbols of the faith, humanity still expresses adoration for a holy God and constructs sacred spaces in his honor. Therefore, the act of building is worship, and the liberty not to build, yet to gather somewhere in this temporary world to honor him, can also provide acceptable worship. The building matters, but more importantly, the mission of God's redemptive work to humankind, healing and restoring, must take precedence for the church to arise.

Finally, leading, feeding, and caring for God's sheep is a pastor's charge. Leading people requires modeling behavior, communicating vision, moving to higher levels of differentiation, and setting boundaries. Understanding the organic process of change and acceptance of new ideas in social systems is part of the job description. Models for working through the process are available and helpful. While it is a challenging process to be sure, leading a church through a construction process can present opportunities for emotional and spiritual growth and maturity for leaders as well as congregants.

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72. Gilbert, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making A Difference*, 117.

Those led to build require an objective process to make the decision to spend significant financial resources. Before the beginning of the work, questions must be answered: What does one need to build and why? What can one afford to build? How will it be paid for? Where should one build? When is the time to build? A church ready to build must be able to articulate through factual analysis, to delineate current and future needs, to count the cost of construction, to measure the financial strength of the congregation, and to know that the site chosen will accommodate the vision. Worship, teaching, and learning are prioritized over all other activities for any church, and the vision and mission must guide the construction processes accordingly. The report will now turn to the story of the building plan for construction of a sacred space to the glory of God.

Chapter III

Action

The vision for the building of a sacred space for worship and ministry is led by two overwhelming factors—the call and the need to do so. The call is often in keeping with an omnipotent, omniscient, living God, who moves in and out of the present and the future, and who causes growth and transformation. In other words, the call is for a vision that is larger and more progressive than is currently evident in the immediate situation. A God-given vision often exceeds one's ability in the present and is manifest in phases as the people and the mission grow and flourish. Preparation for the work necessitates preparing the pastor, the people, and a building process for success. These activities occur simultaneously and are being presented in this order to lend structure to the process.

There is often an information gap for pastors called to construction or renovation projects involving sacred worship and workspace. While denominational instruction and seminary training are invaluable for the practical and theological rigors of ministry, trial and error, information from peers, and reliance on congregants with building experience become the "professors" for pastors after theological study has been completed. It is crucial for a pastor to do a self-assessment, discerning earnestly whether the full knowledge to proceed with a church construction project is available or requires additional training. Such was the case with Visions, and, after prayer, God provided the opportunity.

Executive Training

For the past seven years, Howard University School of Business in Washington, DC, has held an annual Executive Leadership Conference for Ministers. Executive Director Kim R. Wells, MA, MCC, of the Executive Education and Center for Career Excellence, along with Dean Barron H. Harvey, PhD, provide a one-week intensive to improve the business acumen of those called to the gospel ministry. Church Mutual, an insurance carrier who specializes in serving church needs, was an underwriter for the program in May 2019, offering a $400 stipend for clients wishing to attend. Visions officers readily provided the remaining tuition. Instructional topics included: Leadership in Action, Executive Simulation and Executive Mindset Discussion, Project Management for Busy Executives, Introduction of a Church Development Business Case and Team Project, Digital Marketing and Branding Strategies, Strategic Planning for Executives, Financial Management: Strategies and Executive Tools, Succession Planning, Legal and Ethical Issues of the Modern Church Organization, Leading Your Business Enterprise, and a final Business Case Study Presentation and Panel Review.

The instructional staff included some of Howard's top business faculty and instructors, as well as other seasoned practitioners in education and the business arena.[1] Participants included ministry leaders, from across the nation, who exchanged strategies, business skills, and ideas that enhanced confidence in one's ability and could provide

1. The Executive Education and Center for Career Excellence staff included Director Kim Wells; Robert Burke, Program Manager for HUSB Cyber Security Center; Robert Corbitt, Jr., Transformation Center of Excellence, Inc.; President Mark Young, Digital Marketing Executive for TEGNA; Professor Omowale Crenshaw, HUSB Executive MBA Faculty; Theron Green, EMBA, HUSB Executive Instructor ; John Tribble, MBA, CPCU, CCLA, Vice President & Chief Administrative Officer and Bruce Carter, Vice President of Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion for Church Mutual Insurance; Reverend & Judge Enoch Perry, Esq., HUSB Executive Instructor; and Reverend Jeff Wright, MBA, CEO of Urban Ministries Inc., another major underwriter of the program.

immediate impact in one's arena of service. The comprehensive certificate program was structured for emerging ministry leaders who had not attended business school but aspired to growing enterprises with increased management responsibilities requiring more advanced business knowledge. A wealth of information was ascertained.

Project management, the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements, is a discipline unto itself. Defining pain points or major challenges toward completion should be identified early and help focus the trajectory of any task or plan. When shared, principles for project management and their practices encourage and improve communication and outcomes. Appropriate oversight is facilitated with understanding the role of the executive in a project, namely strategic planning, engaging stakeholders, compliance with institutional guidance and guidelines, and spiritual leadership. Other leadership duties include assuring that all legal, fiduciary, and administrative responsibilities are being met, which often requires inclusion of an auditor, attorney, and/or council of advisors in pertinent communiqués and activities. Communicating with the staff and committees, the vision, strategy, new requirements, resources, approvals, and process for issue resolution gives stakeholders clear roadmaps to the direction of any project and assists in defining their contributions and roles. The staff and committees, in turn, begin the team-building process of planning and tracking activities, assuring appropriate documentation, and providing status reports and budgetary requests. The leadership and the staff/committees are then able to perceive the scope and schedule, assess financials, view issues, and manage risks and changes necessary for successful outcomes. While these planning project roles are part of the administrative life of any church, a building project requires that these lines be fluid and

luminous. Keen recommendations included collaboration, efficiency, open communication, cost management, timely scheduling, appropriate drawing on resources in a budget, and capturing lessons learned on all completed projects from the past. This was an executive-level business management course, which was compressed into one week and required rapid absorption of material. A team exercise requiring a strategic plan for a church entangled in scandal and controversy was assigned as the final exam and was presented to a panel of business executives for evaluation and feedback. Knowledge gained was immediately put into play and provided a bridge in the gap to leading God's people in the next steps toward a successful building project.

Methodologies Employed

Of particular interest for the Visions building project was the Agile Project Management methodology. The Agile approach was both iterative and incremental, providing continuous congregational involvement through self-organized teams, simplicity, and change management. In its core values, individuals are respected over processes and tools, working software over comprehensive documentation, collaboration over contract negotiation, and responsiveness to change over following a plan. Sticky note boards with tables for "To Do," "Doing," and "Done," provided excellent visualization, allowing progress to be seen in real time as tasks were completed. A friendly competitiveness fostered collaboration and support for those with uncompleted tasks. The added incentive was that the Agile Project Management approach worked well with modest sized groups. The Missional Change Model, with its five elements of awareness, understanding, evaluation, trial, and commit, would lend itself useful as a companion to this management style.

Initiating a review of pain points, the first step in Agile Project Methodology was enlightening. While Visions was incorporated in 1994, the church had never been branded. There was a defining motto, "Developing Fruit for the Kingdom," but no visual image existed to identify who the church was or what it stood for besides the denominational logo that was always on display. Second, the Sunday church school was instructive, engaging, and interactive, and the Bible study was contemporary and life applicable. Visitors were few, however, and following the initial encounters, there was no follow-up to see if their experiences matched expectations. Third, opportunity to provide other educational training, community engagement, or hosted events was limited by space and lack of able-bodied staff to keep the church open for such events. In terms of social media, the fourth pain point, the Facebook presence was current and communicated involvement in social action, mission, education, and ministry, but the website had gone unattended and lagged behind, and there was no LinkedIn page. Google Maps, however, did provide the location when viewing establishments in the area. Intentionality was commendable, but consistency and presence needed some work.

To ameliorate the lack of digital footprint and marketing presence, EagleEase, LLC, a consulting firm that offers such services to organizations, conducted a twenty-one-point health assessment of the church to ascertain whether all matters of business were in order with the agencies that authorize Visions existence.[2] This involved checking with the Texas Secretary of State, the State Comptroller's Office, and the Internal Revenue Service. Subsequently, an affordable graphic artist, guided by conceptual

2. Rev. Dr. Brenda Arnold-Scott, a past graduate of Houston Graduate School of Theology, is CEO of this consulting firm that offers consulting services to business organizations, setting them up in compliance with laws of the local, state, and federal government. She formulated the matrix, "Assessing Church Health: A 21-Point Healthcheck Tool" (Appendix C).

designs from the pastor, and a color scheme that had previously been adapted as "church colors," developed a logo. Within days, the logo was completed and adopted by the church. The rollout to reflect the new changes was immediate and was quickly realized in new energies among congregants. The new branding prompted the development of new stationary, offering envelopes, church signage, dress shirts, etc. (Appendix B).

Missional Change Model

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk's Missional Change Model.[3] To reiterate, this model introduces five key concepts beginning with awareness but then moving to the four-fold understand, evaluation, trial, and commit. In addition, the Model was influenced by Everett Rogers on the diffusion of innovation, which brought awareness to four elements that affected the spread of new ideas. These included: 1) sharing and innovating missional concepts with the congregation; 2) developing effective communication systems; 3) allowing for appropriate timelines; and 4) engaging a sense of community (or a social system).

The Missional Change Model, coupled with Rogers's ideas, was suitable for use in the introduction of new and creative ways to share the gospel message of love to a receiving community and was the conduit for promoting two new projects that also became part of the capital campaign. The first was to host a formal gala on Valentine's Day to increase presence in the community and to allow for socialization without overt evangelization. The second was a travel excursion to a religiously persuasive locale—Ark Encounter and Creation Museum in northern Kentucky—to learn to share God's message

3. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leadership: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 79-108.

in a non-threatening way that could open discussion about religion and God's place in the world. Teams were formed to accomplish the tasks. Both plans were carried out and experienced following the end of the project.

In taking the first step in the Model, awareness, messages about the upcoming events were posted in the church bulletin and on the social media sites, Facebook, YouTube, and Eventbrite. The Information Technology Ministry of the church assisted with the making of appropriate announcement posters and handouts for both events (Appendix __). Sunday sermons included messages from Genesis on Abraham, who went forward at God's urging, to a place unknown to him, to accomplish God's plan. Members became interested about wearing their formals and tuxedos, which were tucked away in the backs of their closets. Widows questioned who would be appropriate to bring as a "plus one." Others wanted to know if alcohol would be served at the Gala and what food would be served. Committee members took note of the comments and made sure these items were communicated in the handouts. Simultaneously, the "Two by Two Excursion" Committee listened for concerns and secured a travel agency to assist with booking flights and securing ground transportation, hotel, tickets to the venues, and sensitivity to varying restaurants in proximity to the hotel.

Three years prior to the push to build, a system to develop effective communication was implemented for emphasizing announcements, sharing joys and areas of concern, and providing close contact with the pastor and officers. The example of Jesus, who spent a great deal of time breaking bread with his disciples and followers, was modeled. Affectionately known as "The Watering Hole," a light brunch was served after service every Sunday. There was no time limit placed on the fellowship period,

which provided a relaxed environment for those wishing to remain. There were no rules, and congregants were allowed to stay and share or make a plate and leave. Questions to the officers or pastor were answered unceremoniously, and uncertainty became a nonthreatening participant in the day. The Watering Hole became Visions' communication channel or the means by which a message was shared from the source to the receiver. It was here that the Gala and Excursion were shaped, with colorful sticky notes on the erasable board in the Fellowship Hall, communicating what had been done, and allowing other to join in and complete tasks in areas in which they had expertise.

The move to Step Two of the Model—understanding—made use of dialogue to integrate thinking and feeling.[4] One family decided to invite their ninety-year-old matriarch, who was turning ninety the day of the Gala. She was known for being a snappy dresser and loved inter-generational gatherings. This prompted at least eight other members of the family to sign up and have a special cake made in her honor for the occasion. Information being shared within the community prompted another senior to invite three of her married children and their spouses to make the trip to the Ark with her. After listening to conversations and private dialogues at The Watering Hole, dates for the trip were shifted to occur during spring break, so the children would be able to attend. Families began see possibilities to include family, fun, fellowship, and exposure to the Gospel message.

Step Three—evaluation—had already begun rather seamlessly. Questions asked during the evaluation process included: "What are we doing?" "Why are we doing it?"

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4. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leadership: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 91-95.

and "Does it fit our understandings about God's work in the world in and our current practices of life in church and community?"[5]

Interpersonal channels, the most powerful to create or change strong attitudes held by individuals, developed without interference. The Pastor often shared information about changing trends in the Christian community and the rise in missional mindsets around the *missio Dei*. Over time, it became an unchallenged norm that the mission of the church was to collaborate and participate with the ongoing work of redemption in the world, led by the Holy Spirit.

Step Four—experimentation—involved the use of a tactical shift in the tithing, giving, and other financial aspects of the church.[6] Online giving had been introduced to the church previously; however, participation had been scant. With the trip and Gala, online payments necessitated participation through these portals. The Information Management Committee, composed of Millennials and Generation Xers, scheduled a workshop to review use of Givelify. This was followed by a basic computer lab event, held at the Missouri City Library, in which everyone was invited to bring their laptops, tablets, and iPads to ensure that apps were downloaded and usable for seniors. This also allowed communication networks like Google Hangouts and Zoom to be introduced.

Step Five—commitment—to determine a new way of "doing church," when a missionary culture has been the norm, is still being tested.[7] Online giving increased by

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5. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leadership: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 95-96.

6. Ibid., 98.

7. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leadership: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 102.

only 9.6%, but commitment to give regularly increased by 5.2%. The use of tithing envelopes and offering plates remain the giving methods of choice.

Spiritual Methodology

Strengthening devotion to different spiritual disciplines was necessary to undergird the stresses of life and the capacity to stretch during the building and growing process. Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the Presiding Prelate of the Tenth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, authored an exercise to assist in the nurture of utilization of the spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation. *Praycation*, the time devoted to developing the disciplines, was anchored with Col 4:2, "Devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and thankful." Shared in a makeshift labyrinth while citing St. Augustine's *Solvitur Ambulando* (it is solved by walking), the exercise included seven stations—Release, Repent, Reconcile, Reshape, Restore, Receive, and Return. This "Selah Walk" was replicated at Visions to help lead the congregation to a place where they wrote individual permission slips to accomplish the desired results in their lives. While practicing focused prayer, questions and answers led them to make decisions on an action that encouraged enjoyment and successes in life, while promoting a revitalizing navigation through the negative experiences.

An eight-question survey, designed to assess the spiritual health of the congregation as a whole, was administered to attendees at Bible study and church school (Appendix E). Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous. Two thirds of the adult population, ages eighteen and over, returned their questionnaires. The results were affirming of the intentional spiritual instructions shared for the edification of the saints.

Preparing the people of God for the building process did not prove as challenging as anticipated. The church was founded on the concept of developing biblical community and practicing the spiritual disciplines. Emotional maturity was evident among the majority of the officers, and those who were being transformed were being nurtured through the journey.

Familiarity with Bowen Family Systems Theory was meaningful to that end. Triangling, one of the eight concepts or interactive patterns, was observed and became profitable in order to correctly understand some encounters with members. For example, at the heart of being introduced into a discussion between two officers holding opposing views was a level of anxiety about a situation or decision that needed to be made. Recognition of the emotional system in play facilitated intentional connecting by the project director, while maintaining differentiation of self. When the cost of the entire building project exceeded the church's financial capabilities, one trustee wanted to downsize the project, while another wanted to borrow the funds and trust that, by faith, the monies to make the payments would be present when needed. Acknowledging the reality of the financial restrictions, yet the call to walk by faith while interjecting the possibility of building to budget in phases, presented an acceptable compromise supporting both concerns.

The congregation was ready for a permanent place of worship and work. The question remained, whether they were ready to be in relationship with others, including potential new members. Mental remapping and boundary setting principles were initiated to facilitate the shift for this process. Another survey was conducted to evaluate their readiness for this major undertaking, along with the beginning of construction (Appendix

F). The new community center would allow for growth in the congregation, which in turn necessitated new ministries. Twenty-first-century mindsets were needed to accommodate new realities about people in the world, societal regression, changing views, upbringings, ethnicities, blended families, gender fluidity, increased mental health maladies, new gifts, new talents, new personalities, new faces, and changing patterns of getting things done.

John Kotter and Dan Cohen in *The Heart of Change* propose that changing the behavior of a person or group is less about giving them a rational analysis that will influence their thoughts, but rather places emphasis on helping them see a new reality that will influence their feelings.[8] Bible study provided the perfect opportunity to move from a rational approach of analysis-think-change to an emotional approach of see-feel-change.

Seeking a different source for current, relevant engagement, *The Washington Post* proved beneficial. The *Acts of Faith* section provided weekly articles about current events viewed from the lenses of members from the faith community. No topic was off limits. Piquing everyone's interest toward setting the church on a new trajectory were titles such as, "Why Forgiveness offers Freedom," "Still Struggling with Forgiveness," "Fertility and Faith," "'There Isn't Really Anything Magical about It': Why More Millennials are avoiding Sex," and "Ten Unholy Reasons I Take my Toddlers to Church" (Appendix G includes a list of titles, dates, and authors). The Bible study format included opening prayer and reading of the selected article, followed by discussion on the merits and nuances of the behaviors and positions taken as they related to God's word in the age of grace. Scriptures relevant to the topic were identified and shared at the beginning of each

8. John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 2.

session and included parables that required inductive analysis, exegesis of texts from similar situations within the holy writ, and direct commands from Jesus. Life application was emphasized, and open expression of individual viewpoints encouraged. Frank discussions on homosexuality, birth control, transgender challenges, bullying, rising racial tensions in America, and differences in generations X, Y, Z, millennials, and baby boomers emphasized the need to accept change and methods for reaching a world in flux. Many had already seen and accepted the changes in society and expressed concern about the increased anxiety, depression, and lack of "truth" in society. Attendees to the Wednesday night, one-hour lessons expressed appreciation for the informative nature of the study and encouraged others to attend.

The Sacred Space

Simultaneous to these activities, the trustees, who would comprise the core of the building committee, had the land surveyed to identify easements, boundary markers, and utility accesses (Appendix H). A title search was completed to confirm the absence of liens on the property and to document and confirm ownership. Previously, the Pastor had called a church conference to involve the congregation in the strategic planning process, to clarify the direction the trustees desired to pursue, and to obtain a vote of confidence to proceed. The plan garnered overwhelming support. A project manager was identified to assist in the building project. His résumé revealed him to be a retired general contractor who had built several AME church buildings in the Southwest Texas region, and who currently served as trustee *pro-tem* at a sister church in the area. He, in turn, recommended an architect who could meet Visions' budgetary constraints, was qualified, and had completed several projects in the North Houston wards. Both candidates were

vetted for these positions, and, hence, the building process was begun. The architect followed directives given for a three-staged, two-story building that allowed for a “build to budget strategy” (Appendix H). Modifications were necessary to allow for sufficient parking and plans to purchase additional land adjacent to the property were set in motion.

Amid the forward progress, the landlord unexpectedly sent an eviction notice, demanding vacation of the current property in thirty days. No explanation was offered. There were no delinquencies or late payments on record. An appeal for an additional thirty days was granted. The trustees decided to search for a new location before alerting the congregation. Ultimately, God opened the door for relocation to the Heaven on Earth Event Venue in Missouri City, less than a mile away. This six-acre property, with a mansion built in the late 1800s, includes a stand-alone chapel and a larger chapel within the main mansion (Appendix I). After the contract was signed, the church membership was notified, and leadership in yet another new direction became necessary.

The owner scheduled a tour of the mansion for the congregation. A spirit of cooperation for packing, discarding, or gifting items not to be taken to the new facility required new lay leadership to arise and fostered a view toward the final location. Most church furnishings were placed in climate-controlled storage, and needed items were packed for mobility. Phone service was forwarded to the pastor’s residence to maintain the same recognized number, social media and Internet presences were changed to reflect the change in address, and the capital campaign proceeded without interruption.

Having settled into the new location, the Pastor and officers returned their focus to the building project, the proposed plans, and the capital campaign The first stage of construction included the laying of the foundation, the erection of the lobby, fellowship

hall, kitchen, first floor bathrooms, lounge, nursery area, and two offices. The second floor would be left for buildout as funding allowed. The cost of the first stage of construction was conservatively given at $400,000. This, then, required the church to have half to sixty percent of those funds on hand before approaching a lending institution. Two activities, developed by the officers at the Watering Hole while brainstorming evangelistic ideas, were modified to include a fundraising component—the formal Valentine's Day gala and the trip to Cincinnati/North Kentucky (Two By Two Excursion) to explore the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum, described above. Attracting new members, increasing presence in the community, and allowing for socialization without overt evangelization, would still be the primary focus of these events. The majority of growth in the building fund would come from intentional giving by the members, inclusive of legacy gifts. An aggressive appeal to the membership was suggested in light of the forced move the church had just experienced, and the church anniversary month was recommended as the target launch point.

In summation, the activity of this project included four areas of function. One was the executive training for the pastor to sharpen administrative acumen for strategic planning and analysis of the church's strengths and vulnerabilities. Second was the use of the Missional Change Model to enhance congregational involvement and stimulate the formulation of creative ideas meant to engage the community. Spiritual growth was enhanced by use of a set of spiritual disciplines assembled in a revival walk. Third was a Bible study using current events and *The Washington Post's* Articles of Faith section. The fourth area of functionality involved the construction committee and the pre-building process itself. The work is ongoing.

Chapter IV

Evaluation

Every journey offers lessons for those who have an ear to hear and a heart to receive. This chapter shares several of those valuable revelations, as the outcomes anticipated during this project were fulfilled. First and most emphatically, the church is the body of believers in the Lord Jesus, the Christ, not a building. That being said, the research supported the fact that the church building is essential, as it carries significance for what it represents in the community—a symbol. The buildings are where people can assemble in safety and mark the important events of their life (i.e., Baptisms, weddings, first communions, birthdays, anniversary celebrations, as well as "home-goings" or funerals). The buildings are where people find encouragement during tough times, develop their faith, and grow spiritually. The buildings are a symbol of the Christian faith and, therefore, carry great meaning and importance in family living and community. They should be constructed with forethought, forward view, and great care.

Outcome One

The first outcome of this project involved the creation of a strategic planning tool to facilitate the construction process. It was to be adaptable for others to use. Such a tool or visual process was shared at the Howard University School of Business. The design was malleable and applicable to this work and was incorporated with minimal change (Appendix D). In the initial phase of the strategic planning session, a SWOT analysis was conducted to receive input from the congregation and uncover a realistic view of

Visions church. Multiple strengths were identified, including the presence of noteworthy intellectual property (social media, medicine, real estate, project management, and retired teachers), having a good reputation in the denomination and the community, having a dedicated core group in the congregation, with numerous tithing members, and being debt-free. Additionally, eighty-five percent of the congregants had completed criminal background checks and child safety training, a van was available to assist with transportation, and visitors affirmed a spirit of hospitality at work in the church.

Weaknesses centered on the size of the congregation, a point that was brought home in the officers' survey, the twenty-one-point health check. There were too few in Generation X, ages thirty-five to forty-five, Generation Y, ages nineteen to thirty-eight, and Generation Z, ages one to eighteen, with a disproportionate number of males compared to females in the congregation. There was a music department, but no choir or trained musician. There was also no paid secretarial staff. The facility at the strip center was found to offer only fair curb appeal. Congregants did recognize several opportunities, however, including relocation, intentional efforts to increase membership, and improving the church's social media footprint and media presence. It was also felt that giving, gifting, and legacy members could be increased. In addition, three major threats were recognized, centering around the need to increase onsite security, to address stagnation in movement toward building a permanent presence in the community, and to recognize the fear that a few deaths could threaten the church's existence.

Information gathered was used in goal formulation, mainly focused on removing the threats and maximizing opportunities. Four goals were set: 1) increase social media content, 2) begin church school and Sunday worship promptly at the times advertised, 3)

increase visitor traffic, 4) and increase church membership. It was felt that these goals could be accomplished within a six-month time period. This process provided orderly inclusion of all interested members of the congregation, increasing participation and interest in the direction of the ministry, and it also allowed all members to evaluate their levels of commitment and participation in the growth and health of the church as it attempted to align with a Kingdom agenda.

Outcome Two

The second outcome, the preparation of a document ready for submission to a proposed lending institution, could not be accomplished without raising additional funds and increasing the membership. Several lending institutions were approached to discuss loan application prerequisites. Prosperity Bank was forthcoming and provided a detailed Church Loan Questionnaire to prepare the church for the process (Appendix J). The branding of Visions, improved digital footprint, securing of state and federal documents confirming compliance, and the proof of land survey and title search were all deemed necessary to complete the application. In addition, the architect or project manager must submit a cost assessment for construction. More work is required before this document can be completed.

Outcome Three

The third and final outcome was to measure the congregation's readiness to undertake the construction project. The results of the survey of the congregation prior to beginning the building process, a survey of the officers, as well as the results of the spiritual gifts survey (in percentages), are presented to respond to this outcome.

Pastoral leadership for this project required intentionality, realistic assessments, congregational buy-in, endurance, flexibility, and a long-range view. Stability and consistency in leadership facilitated smoother preparation of the people of God for the building process. The Pastor presented formational concepts to nurture biblical community and to practice the spiritual disciplines from the church's inception. A culture was created within the congregation to experience inspirational daily exchanges in conversation, inclusiveness in all activities, welcoming gestures and attitudes toward visitors, and care for one another. Emotional maturity was evident among the majority of the officers, and those who were being transformed were being nurtured through the journey. An eight-question survey, designed to assess the spiritual health of the congregation, was administered to seventy percent of the adult members attending Bible study and/or church school. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous. Two-thirds of the adult population, ages eighteen and over, returned their questionnaires.

The survey confirmed that the priorities toward Kingdom principles being taught in Bible study, church school, and Sunday sermons, had a positive impact toward the establishment of a viable biblical community at Visions. Greater than ninety percent of congregants found that the congregation was a safe place to explore brokenness, offered a sense of commonality, provided dynamic worship, embraced room for failings and imperfection, and accepted suffering as normative but growth promoting. One hundred percent felt that the Pastor provided competent spiritual leadership and was emotionally stable, firm, fair, and loving. Eighty-six percent expressed a willingness to share their vulnerabilities.

Peter Wagner of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth is well-known for his work in the field of evangelism. He developed a focused questionnaire to assess spiritual gifts, which was modified by Richard F. Houts, Professor of Christian Education at Ontario Bible College, in May 1976. The Modified Houts Questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to the congregation as a part of an individual spiritual formation exercise and to provide guidance in the selection of projects taken on by the church, matching gifts to the work. Nearly forty percent of the congregants held primary gifts of hospitality, helps, and service, seventeen percent in giving, and ten percent in missions. Fewer than five percent had administrative, leadership, and wisdom gifts. Teaching, discerning of spirits, mercy, and intercession were also revealed, but minimal, giftings. The results were helpful in explaining why the congregation was malleable, less aggressive to leadership, and open to facility plans and projects proposed by the leadership.

Establishing a biblical community had not been an after-thought. Development of The Watering Hole was an effort to build an emotional climate devoid of energy-stealing stress that could decrease performance and creativity necessary for success. Instead, breaking bread together, with accessibility to leadership, sharing of the details of daily living, and receiving immediate responses to inquiries, created an atmosphere of trust, acceptance, and concern.

Simultaneously, twenty-first-century Bible study with contemporary topics stimulated by articles from “Acts of Faith” in *The Washington Post* facilitated spiritual emotional growth. Discussions fostered deep connections and facilitated positive, optimistic thinking patterns among God’s people. The topics helped mold a culture

within the core congregation and helped set boundaries for acceptable behavior with others in collaborative projects and interpersonal activities.

The congregation openly expressed a desire for a permanent place of worship and work. Subsequently, a different survey was conducted with the officers to ascertain an accurate assessment of the health of the church and its readiness for the major undertaking of a building project. The new community center would allow adequate space for growth in membership, ministry options for the neighborhood, as well as additional, temporal responsibilities for its trustees. An objective outside agency had never audited the business acumen of the leadership and certified that all matters of business were in order with the agencies that authorize Visions' existence.

Unexpected questions were also raised, such as the number of members on the roll, the number of congregants in worship services, and the number of accessions reported annually. While it was obvious that the congregation was small, not everyone had seen it as a liability. The Great Commission's clarion call to seek out others and introduce them to Christ had somehow been given a passing glance, while service and mission outside the church had been the priority. Doing good works had superseded the importance of discipling and bringing people within the four walls for perfecting, transformation, and teaching. Already apparent to the Pastor, balance needed to be established, and that realization was now communicated to the leadership.

The enormous changes that have transpired across the culture in the Western world require that the church rethink its attitudes and habits and begin exploring fresh ideas as it shares the evangel within a community. The Missional Change Model formulated by Roxburgh and Romanuk looked at the nature of change within

congregations introduced to missional concepts. The five elements of awareness, understanding, evaluation, trial, and commitment describe the stages recommended for successful adoption of new ideas. While Visions was never established as a missional community, its trajectory as a social group was not in conflict with the principal tenets of establishing biblical community, emotional maturity of the leadership, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. The Bible study sessions and Sunday sermons provided awareness and understanding, as affirmed by the results of the questionnaire completed by the adult members. Trial and commitment will only be tested as the congregation grows, though experiences and testimonies shared during church school suggest that some individual experimentation with the principles had already begun at the time of this writing.

The formation of new ministries developed from feedback of an evangelism team canvassing the neighborhood was the measure of completion for positively affecting the community surrounding the building site. The team, made up of officers and a few youth members, found neighbors open to prayer, welcoming of a new space where they could congregate, attend some evening workshops or classes, and use wi-fi for free. There were concerns about the increased traffic and mixed feelings about a possible coffee bar and limited daycare services. Many attended another house of worship sporadically but were open to visiting the church. No specific needs were identified. Only about thirty-five of the sixty-four homes in the nearby area allowed engagement with someone in the home. No one answered the door at other homes. A total of 2350 homes make up the Briargate Subdivision in east Ft. Bend County; however, development continues in the area. It was decided by the team that a more structured approach with mailouts, flyers or newsletter,

and an activity on the grounds might improve engagement and required reorganization of efforts. However, the evangelism team is currently inactive.

Experimenting with something new, the Agile Project Management Model—more of a business process for completion of a task and useful for tracking progress—was not necessarily useful for facilitating change. Focused pastoral leadership must direct the efforts of any project toward change, with intentionality, realistic assessments, congregational concurrence, endurance, flexibility, and an eye on the future. Missional efforts require less control of outcomes and more openness and awareness of God's divine intention for the affairs of men and his church. A God-inspired vision of the future, combined with a spiritually vital congregation, moved and guided by Kingdom principles, are complements that provide the ingredients for experimentation into missionally minded attitudes and goals.

As this project concluded, the church conference's surveys to measure commitment of the congregants, confirmation of spiritual gifting, efforts of the leadership, and willingness to stay open to God were confirmed. The pre-construction process, though moving slowly, was underway. Varied training sessions for the pastor and the people were occurring with good attendance and interest. The outcomes of this living project have been met in part and in spirit. Anticipation of what God will reveal in the next phase is a part of this faith walk.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The title search is done. The survey of the land is completed. The architect has completed the designs and elevations for the building. The project manager is preparing final budget documents, and the capital campaign is underway. To recap, the intended subject of this study was the leading of Visions African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in a building project of a Family Life Center in an existing, older subdivision in the Southwest Houston/Missouri City area. Locally, little direction from the denominational church has been forthcoming to recommend or to provide a process to accomplish this task. The initial focus was on completion of the building itself, making certain that it was designed with intentionality, financial accountability, and biblical symbolism. Ultimately, the unmistakable reality emerged that the building matters, but, more importantly, the mission of God's redemptive work to humankind, healing, and restoration must take precedence for the church to fulfill its purpose. Leadership, then, is about influencing the people to experience transformative encounters with the Creator as a biblical community is formed, spiritual growth and awakening is fostered, and emotional maturity is made manifest.

In this era of decline in the Christian West, culturally and geographically, a fundamental paradigm shifting of mindsets has been seen in the body of Christ. In mission and theological circles, leadership recognized the declining prominence of the

church in the world, requiring unanticipated adjustments. Declines in church growth and attendance, losses in the youth demographic, and confusing expressions of who the church represents raised other questions yet to be answered. Is it necessary to build a church edifice? Is the financial investment prudent, mission worthy, and preferable to addressing human needs? The significance of the structures that house the *ecclesia* were examined in the research and found to be consequential, even unnecessary according to some opinions. Alternate spaces for the assembling of the saints have surfaced among Christian groups, from YMCAs to strip centers. Older church buildings have been repurposed and recycled. Though New Testament revelations confirm that the physical church building is unnecessary, the symbols of the faith that the buildings represent provide stability, mark time through the important stages of life, and enhance community. Thus, sacred spaces, church edifices are needful and soothing to humanity.

For those led to build, an organized process is required to make the decision to spend significant financial resources. Knowing what one needs to build and why, what one can afford to build, how it will be paid for, where to build, and when to build, must be answered before the work begins. A church ready to build must be able to articulate through factual analysis what its needs are in the present and in the future, count the cost of construction, measure the financial strength of the congregation, and know that the site chosen will accommodate the vision. Teaching, learning, and, certainly, worship are accomplished with regularity over all other activities for any church, and a clear vision and mission for the institution must guide the course taken.

Leading, feeding, and caring for God’s sheep is a pastor’s charge. Necessary skill sets include an awareness of the biblical, historical, and theological echoes of the past for

clear direction in the future. Knowing how God perceived sacred space and what it represented for the people brings clarity to any project. Leading people requires modeling behavior, communicating vision, and setting boundaries. Leading people requires emotional maturity, humility, and flexibility. Leading the people requires the Holy Spirit. Understanding the organic process of change and acceptance of new ideas in social systems is also part of the job description. Models for working through the process, such as the Missional Change Model and the Congregational Transformation Model, provide some guidance and are malleable enough to serve varying assemblies.

In the midst of all plans, the unexpected can appear. Detours may interrupt but are not necessarily disruptive. During this project, growth among the church body was seen as it faced unexpected relocation. Cohesion behind a new, albeit brief, purpose took place and served to mobilize all stake holders during the process of discarding/donating of the old, packing away what was useful, and envisioning what would be needed in the future. While no measure was attempted, the cooperation and participation of greater than ninety percent of the church membership to accomplish the task in a matter of weeks was admirable. Young and old, male and female, retired and employed, all found time to pitch in and do what they could. Emotional maturity was witnessed as they gave way to each other in the point position each day, continuing the previous day's strategies, and yielding to the expertise available on each shift. With much jocularity, sharing of food, and use of each other's strengths, the fellowship became even more of a family.

Spiritual growth was enhanced by a non-conventional Bible study that brought life application and understanding of the Word in this complex, chaotic world. Evaluation of spiritual gifts revealed deficits in administrative expertise of the Pastor and the

congregation. Additional training was sought to bridge the gap, strategic planning was improved, and goal formulation was honed. An outside consultant was brought in to review all administrative documents and to ensure compliance with all state and other governmental regulations. A short survey provided several confirmations—the church had confidence in its leadership, the church was welcoming and poised for growth, and there was spiritual growth among the congregants.

Communication and transparency in all matters concerning the administration of the church and details of the building process facilitated a smooth, peaceful consensus about directions taken. The Watering Hole, a place for food, fellowship, and open discussion allowed members unshackled access to leadership, including the Pastor, to dialogue on any topic of interest or area of concern. Without the official standing of a board meeting, with no voting required, this "town hall" format took place weekly, providing the membership with greater confidence in the leadership and an opportunity to be heard.

Time, the unchangeable nonspatial continuum over which man has no control, allows many lessons to unfold. "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps" (Prov. 16:9). What changes over time are the hearts, intentions, mindsets, character, and will of humanity to accomplish, build, share with, and care for each other in the lives given by the Master. This congregation saw change. Buildings are constructed, resurrected, and demolished daily. Oneness of purpose, however, living into oneness, and extending that understanding to others is the real work of discipleship. New ideas and changing paradigms have to have time to walk around in the lives of the people being affected. Providing an atmosphere of peaceful, principled, organized socialization,

with repetition and reinforcement of those new ideas is necessary for successful transitioning. The undertaking of building sacred spaces requires preparation of the Pastor and the people, while maneuvering through the maze of title searches, building codes, surveys, and capital campaigns. The gift of time and the will of God calls the brave and courageous to move forward without fear. Leading and listening, the journey continues.

Appendix A

The Modified Houts Questionnaire

THE MODIFIED HOUTS QUESTIONNAIRE: INSTRUCTIONS

The Modified Houts Questionnaire is an exercise to help give you a handle on what your spiritual gift(s) might be. It was originally designed by Richard F. Houts, a Professor of Christian Education at Ontario Bible College (Eternity, May 1976, pp. 18-21), and later revised by C. Peter Wagner of the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth.

Here is how to do it:

STEP 1: Go through the list of 125 statements in the questionnaire on pages 2-7. For each one, mark to what extent the statement is true to your life: MUCH, SOME, LITTLE, or NOT AT ALL.

STEP 2: When you are finished, score the questionnaire by means of the Houts Chart (page 8).

STEP 3: After filling in all your scores on the Houts Chart, refer to pages 9-14 and transfer the names of the spiritual gifts to their corresponding rows on the chart. The order in which the gifts appear is identical to their order on the Houts Chart. You will want to study the gift definitions and Scripture references.

Note: This questionnaire is just a starting place in helping you to discover the spiritual gift(s) that God has given you. Do not make the mistake of considering the results to be final and irrefutable. It may even be that a gift you actually have does not show strongly here. Use this tool as a helpful source of insight, but do not let its results control you.

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STEP 1: MODIFIED HOUTS QUESTIONNAIRE

For each statement, mark to what extent it is true to your life: MUCH, SOME, LITTLE, or NOT AT ALL.

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
1.	I have proclaimed God's truth in a way that at times irritated the "establishment."				
2.	I have enjoyed the responsibility for the spiritual well-being of a group of Christians.				
3.	I feel I could enable persons to learn Biblical truths in detail.				
4.	I have applied truth effectively in my own life.				
5.	I have the ability to discover new truths for myself.				
6.	I have verbally encouraged the wavering, the troubled or the discouraged.				
7.	I have clearly perceived the difference between truth and error.				
8.	I desire to manage money well in order to give liberally to the Lord's work.				
9.	I have assisted leaders to relieve them for their essential job.				
10.	I have a desire to work with those who have physical or mental problems, to alleviate their suffering.				
11.	I have adapted easily in a culture different from mine.				
12.	I have led others to a decision for salvation through faith in Christ.				
13.	I feel I could provide food and/or lodging graciously to those in need.				
14.	I have had confidence that God would keep His promises in spite of circumstantial evidence.				
15.	I have a desire to persuade others to move toward achieving Biblical objectives.				
16.	I have been able to discern when to delegate important responsibility, and to whom to delegate it.				
17.	In the Name of the Lord, I have been used to miraculously change circumstances, and He was glorified.				
18.	In the Name of the Lord, I have been used in curing diseases.				
19.	I have spoken in tongues.				
20.	I have interpreted messages given in tongues.				
21.	I have felt a sense of authority in relating to other Christians.				
22.	I am single and enjoy it.				

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
23.	I have had a sense of recognizing prayer needs before others.				
24.	I feel I could face imprisonment, or even death, for my faith with confidence.				
25.	I would enjoy being called upon to do special jobs around the church.				
26.	Through God, I can reveal what will happen in the future.				
27.	I have enjoyed relating to the same group of people over a long period of time, in their successes and their failures.				
28.	I feel I could explain clearly the New Testament teaching about the health and ministry of the Body of Christ.				
29.	I can intuitively arrive at solutions to complicated problems.				
30.	I have had insights of truth that brought conviction to other Christians.				
31.	I feel I could be an instrument for dislodging the complacent and redirecting the wayward to face spiritual reality.				
32.	I have judged well between good and evil.				
33.	I have given things or money cheerfully for the Lord's work.				
34.	I have sensed the need to help others become more effective in their ministries.				
35.	I have felt unusual compassion for those with physical or spiritual needs.				
36.	I feel I could learn another language well in order to minister to those in a different culture.				
37.	I have shared joyfully how Christ has brought me to Himself in a way that is meaningful to non-believers.				
38.	I have provided a gracious haven for guests without the feeling of family interruption.				
39.	I have received from God an unusual assurance that He will do the impossible to fulfill a special work.				
40.	I know where I am going, and I have seen other Christians follow me.				
41.	I can organize ideas, people, resources and time for more effective ministry.				
42.	In the Name of the Lord, I have cast out demons.				
43.	In the Name of the Lord, I have healed the emotionally disturbed.				
44.	I have spoken an immediate message from God to His people in a language I have never learned.				
45.	I have interpreted tongues with the result that the body of Christ was edified, exhorted or comforted.				
46.	I feel I could proclaim the gospel in a new area and see new groups of Christians formed.				

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
47.	I am single and feel indifferent toward being married.				
48.	I take prayer requests more seriously than other Christians seem to.				
49.	I do not feel fear about suffering physical persecution for my faith.				
50.	I have been able to effectively take care of odd jobs around the church.				
51.	I have communicated to others timely and urgent messages that I believe came directly from God.				
52.	I tend to know intimately those I serve and guide, and to be known intimately by them.				
53.	I can devote a great amount of time to learning new Biblical truths to communicate to others.				
54.	I have chosen from several Biblical alternatives an option that usually worked.				
55.	I feel I can acquire and master new facts and principles of Bible truth.				
56.	I have urged others to seek a Biblical solution to their affliction or suffering.				
57.	I tend to look beneath the surface and examine people's motives.				
58.	I feel deeply moved when confronted with urgent financial needs in God's work.				
59.	I have enjoyed doing routine tasks that led to more effective ministry by others.				
60.	I would enjoy visiting in hospitals and/or retirement homes and would do fine in such a ministry.				
61.	I have been able to relate well to Christians in a different race, language or culture.				
62.	I have explained clearly that Jesus is the Savior and have seen positive effects on the listeners.				
63.	I have a knack for making strangers feel at home.				
64.	I can trust in the power and presence of God for the impossible.				
65.	I would enjoy leading, inspiring and motivating others to involve themselves in the lord's work.				
66.	I have been able to make effective and efficient plans for accomplishing the goals of a group.				
67.	God has intervened many times to do impossible things through my life.				
68.	In the Name of the Lord, I have successfully treated those who were spiritually sick.				
69.	I can speak to God in a language I have never learned.				
70.	I have prayed that I might interpret if someone begins speaking in tongues.				

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
71.	Other Christians have been willing to do what I say, without asking many questions.				
72.	I am glad I have more time to serve the Lord because I am single.				
73.	Prayer has been one of my favorite spiritual exercises.				
74.	I feel confident that dying for my faith would not be the worst thing that could happen to me.				
75.	I feel satisfaction in performing routine tasks for God's glory.				
76.	I have a desire to speak direct messages from God that edify, exhort or comfort others.				
77.	I have helped needy Christians by guiding them to relevant portions of the Bible and praying with them.				
78.	I feel I could communicate Biblical truths to others and see resulting changes in knowledge, attitudes, values or conduct.				
79.	I have been able to perceive and apply Biblical truth to the specific needs of the Body of Christ.				
80.	I have studied and read a great deal to learn Biblical truths.				
81.	I have a desire to effectively counsel the perplexed, the guilty or the addicted.				
82.	I have accurately recognized whether a teaching is from God, from Satan or from human origin.				
83.	I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to Him sacrificially and consistently.				
84.	I am happy when others get credit for what I do.				
85.	I would enjoy taking shut-ins out for a drive or assisting them in other practical ways.				
86.	I feel I could enjoy living in a foreign country.				
87.	I have a desire to speak messages that are primarily the gospel of salvation.				
88.	I have a genuine graciousness toward and appreciation for the guests who come to my home.				
89.	I have felt sure I knew God's specific will for the future growth of His work, even when others have not been so sure.				
90.	I have influenced others to accomplish a particular task or Biblical purpose.				
91.	I am able to give directions to others and make decisions for them, rather than trying to persuade them to my way of thinking.				
92.	I have been an instrument for God's supernatural change in lives and events.				
93.	I have prayed for others so that healing occurred.				

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
94.	When I give a public message in tongues, I expect it to be interpreted.				
95.	I have interpreted tongues in a way that seemed to bless others.				
96.	I have a desire to be sent out by a church to start new churches.				
97.	I am single, but have little difficulty controlling my sexual desires.				
98.	God has consistently answered my prayers in tangible ways.				
99.	I feel that terrorist threats of death would not shake my faith.				
100.	I have been able to identify what needs to be done around the church and volunteer to help.				
101.	I have given messages of warning, judgement or direction from the Lord.				
102.	I feel I can restore persons who have wandered away from their Christian community.				
103.	I have trained Christians to be more obedient disciples of Christ.				
104.	I have felt an unusual presence of God and personal confidence when important decisions needed to be made.				
105.	I have been able to distinguish important and key facts of Scripture.				
106.	I have comforted Christians in their afflictions or sufferings in such a way that they felt helped or healed.				
107.	I can see through a phony before his phoniness is clearly evident to other people.				
108.	I have been willing to maintain a lower standard of living in order to benefit God's work.				
109.	I would be happy to be a teacher's aide in a Bible class.				
110.	I would enjoy offering cheerful conversation to a lonely, shut-in person or someone in prison.				
111.	More that most, I have had a strong desire to see people in other countries won to the Lord.				
112.	I have a burden to seek out unbelievers in order to win them to Christ.				
113.	I have desired to make my home available to those in the Lord's service.				
114.	I can trust in the reliability of God when all else looks dim.				
115.	Others have followed me because I have had some expert knowledge that contributed to the edification of the church.				
116.	I have enjoyed bearing the responsibility for the success of a group or organization.				
117.	In the Name of the lord, I have been able to recover sight to the blind.				

		(3) MUCH	(2) SOME	(1) LITTLE	(0) NOT AT ALL
118.	I have prayed successfully for others for restoration of health apart from natural means.				
119.	When I speak in tongues, I believe it is edifying to the Lord's Body.				
120.	I have interpreted tongues in such a way that the message appeared to be directly from God.				
121.	I have received a commission from Christians to exercise God-given authority among believers and non-believers.				
122.	I can really identify with Paul's desire for others to be single as he was.				
123.	I desire to faithfully pray for others in ministry, since I realize that their effectiveness relies upon it.				
124.	I can identify with persecuted Christians who will not recant to avoid imprisonment or death.				
125.	I respond cheerfully when asked to do tasks, even if they seem menial.				

STEP 2: MODIFIED HOUTS CHART

In the grid below, enter the numerical value of each of your responses next to the number of the corresponding statements on pages 2-7:

MUCH = 3 SOME = 2 LITTLE = 1 NOT AT ALL = 0

Then, add up the five numbers that you have recorded in each row and place the sum in the "TOTAL" column.

ROWS	VALUE OF ANSWERS					TOTAL	GIFTS (See pages 10-13)
A.	1.	26.	51.	76.	101.		PROPHECY
B.	2.	27.	52.	77.	102.		PASTOR
C.	3.	28.	53.	78.	103.		TEACHING
D.	4.	29.	54.	79.	104.		WISDOM
E.	5.	30.	55.	80.	105.		KNOWLEDGE
F.	6.	31.	56.	81.	106.		EXHORTATION
G.	7.	32.	57.	82.	107.		DISCERNING OF SPIRITS
H.	8.	33.	58.	83.	108.		GIVING
I.	9.	34.	59.	84.	109.		HELPS
J.	10.	35.	60.	85.	110.		MERCY
K.	11.	36.	61.	86.	111.		MISSIONARY
L.	12.	37.	62.	87.	112.		EVANGELIST
M.	13.	38.	63.	88.	113.		HOSPITALITY
N.	14.	39.	64.	89.	114.		FAITH
O.	15.	40.	65.	90.	115.		LEADERSHIP
P.	16.	41.	66.	91.	116.		ADMINISTRATION
Q.	17.	42.	67.	92.	117.		MIRACLES
R.	18.	43.	68.	93.	118.		HEALING
S.	19.	44.	69.	94.	119.		TONGUES
T.	20.	45.	70.	95.	120.		INTERPRETATION
U.	21.	46.	71.	96.	121.		APOSTLE
V.	22.	47.	72.	97.	122.		CELIBACY
W.	23.	48.	73.	98.	123.		INTERCESSION
X.	24.	49.	74.	99.	124.		MARTYRDOM
Y.	25.	50.	75.	100.	125.		SERVICE

NOTE: The capital Letters before the gift definitions on the following pages corresponds with Rows A-Y.

STEP 3: REVIEW OF GIFT DEFINITIONS AND SCRIPTURE REFERNECES

The following four pages (9-14) contain suggested definitions of the spiritual gifts. While not meant to be dogmatic or final, these definitions and supporting scriptures do correspond to characteristics of the gifts as expressed in the MODIFIED HOUTS QUESTIONNAIRE.

ROWS	GIFT DEFINITIONS	SCRIPTURES
A.	PROPHECY: The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely anointed utterance.	1 Corinthians 12:10, 28 Ephesians 4:11-14 Romans 12:6 Luke 7:26 Acts 15:32 Acts 21:9-11
B.	PASTOR: The gift of pastor is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers.	Ephesians 4:11-14 1 Timothy 3:1-7 John 10:1-18 1 Peter 5:1-3
C.	TEACHING: The gift of teaching is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the Body and its members in such a way that others will listen.	1 Corinthians 12:28 Ephesians 4:11-14 Romans 12:7 Acts 18:25-28 Acts 20:20-21
D.	WISDOM: The gift of wisdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as best to receive insight into how given knowledge may best be applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ.	1 Corinthians 2:1-13 1 Corinthians 12:8 Acts 6:3 James 1:5-6 2 Peter 3:15

E.	KNOWLEDGE: The gift of knowledge is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to discover, accumulate, analyze and clarify information and ideas which are pertinent to the growth and well-being of the Body.	1 Corinthians 2:14 1 Corinthians 12:8 Acts 5:1-11 Colossians 2:2-3 2 Corinthians 11:6
F.	EXHORTATION: The gift of exhortation is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel helped and healed.	Romans 12:8 1 Timothy 4:13 Hebrews 10:25 Acts 14:22
G.	DISCERNING OF SPIRITS: The gift of discerning of spirits is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is, in reality, divine, human or satanic.	1 Corinthians 12:10 Acts 5:1-11 Acts 16:16-18 1 John 4:1-6 Matthew 16:21-23
H.	GIVING: The gift of giving is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness.	Romans 12:8 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 2 Corinthians 9:2-8 Mark 12:41-44
I.	HELPS: The gift of helps is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to invest in the talents they have in the life and ministry of other members of the Body, thus enabling those others to increase the effectiveness of their own spiritual gifts.	1 Corinthians 12:28 Romans 16:1-2 Acts 9:36 Luke 8:2-3 Mark 15:40-41

J.	MERCY: The gift of mercy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals (both Christian and non-Christian) who suffer distressing physical, mental or emotional problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully-done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering.	Romans 12:8 Mark 9:41 Acts 16:33-34 Luke 10:33-35 Matthew 20:29-34 Matthew 25:34-40 Acts 11:28-30
K.	MISSIONARY: The gift of missionary is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister whatever other spiritual gifts they have in a second culture.	1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Acts 8:4 Acts 13:2-3 Acts 22:21 Romans 10:15
L.	EVANGELIST: The gift of evangelist is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to share the gospel with unbelievers in such a way that men and women become Jesus' disciples and responsible members of the Body of Christ.	Ephesians 4:11-14 2 Timothy 4:5 Acts 8:5-6 Acts 8:26-40 Acts 14:21 Acts 21:8
M.	HOSPITALITY: The gift of hospitality is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to provide an open house and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging.	1 Peter 4:9 Romans 12:9-13 Romans 16:23 Acts 16:14-15 Hebrews 13:1-2
N.	FAITH: The gift of faith is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for His work.	1 Corinthians 12:9 Acts 11:22-24 Acts 27:21-25 Hebrews 11 Romans 4:18-21

O.	LEADERSHIP: The gift of leadership is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish those goals for the glory of God.	1 Timothy 5:17 Acts 7:10 Acts 15:7-11 Romans 12:8 Hebrews 13:17 Luke 9:51
P.	ADMINISTRATION: The gift of administration is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the Body of Christ and to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals.	1 Corinthians 12:28 Acts 6:1-7 Acts 27:11 Luke 14:28-30
Q.	MIRACLES: The gift of miracles is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to perform powerful acts that are perceived by observers to have altered the ordinary course of nature.	1 Corinthians 12:10, 28 Acts 9:36-42 Acts 9:11-20 Acts 20:7-12 Romans 15: 18-19 2 Corinthians 12:12
R.	HEALING: The gift of healing is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to serve as human intermediaries through whom it pleases God to cure illness and restore health apart from the use of natural means.	1 Corinthians 12:9, 28 Acts 3:1-10 Acts 5:12-16 Acts 9:32-35 Acts 28:7-10
S.	TONGUES: The gift of tongues is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ (a) to speak to God in a language they have never learned and/or (b) to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely-anointed utterance in a language they have never learned.	1 Corinthians 12:10, 28 1 Corinthians 14:13-19 Acts 2:1-13 Acts 10:44-46 Acts 19:1-7 Mark 16:17

T.	INTERPRETATION: The gift of interpretation is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to make known in the vernacular the message of one who speaks in tongues.	1 Corinthians 12:10, 30 1 Corinthians 14:13 1 Corinthians 14:26-28
U.	APOSTLE: The gift of apostle is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume and exercise general leadership over a number of churches with an extraordinary authority in spiritual matters which is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches.	1 Corinthians 12:28 2 Corinthians 12:12 Ephesians 4:11-14 Ephesians 3:1-9 Acts 15:1-2 Galatians 2:7-10
V.	CELIBACY: The gift of celibacy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to remain single and enjoy it; to be unmarried and not suffer undue sexual temptations.	1 Corinthians 7:7-8 Matthew 19:10-12
W.	INTERCESSION: The gift of intercession is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers, to a degree much greater than that which is expected of the average Christian.	James 5:14-16 1 Timothy 2:1-2 Colossians 1:9-12 Colossians 4:12-13 Acts 12:12 Luke 22:41-44
X.	MARTYRDOM: The gift of martyrdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to undergo suffering for the faith, even to the point of death, while consistently displaying a joyous and victorious attitude which brings glory to God.	1 Corinthians 13:3 Acts 5:27-41 Acts 7:54-60 Acts 12:1-5 2 Corinthians 11:21-30 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Y.	SERVICE: The gift of service is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work, and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired results.	2 Timothy 1:16-18 Romans 12;7 Acts 6:1-7 Titus 3:14 Galatians 6:2, 10

For a more complete description of these, you may want to read the book by C. Peter Wagner; Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow. It is available through the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth.

Appendix B

Visions AME Church Logo/Motto

VISIONS
Developing Fruit for the Kingdom

Appendix C

Assessing Church Health: 21-Point Healthcheck Tool and Checklist

21 POINT HEALTHCHECK		
Alerts	Matrix From "Assessing Church Health: A 21 Point Health	
7 or more closing imminent	ABC AME Church	DEF AME Church
1-3 generally good health	Example	Example
4-6 (Plan of Resolution)		
Questions		
(1) How long has the church been in the community? Is the community in transition/decline? Category	75 years/Yes, based on Census Data/5	5 years/No, based on Cen Data/5
(2) What is the number of members on the roll ?	7	15
(3) What is the average number of participants in each service?	1	12
(4) Is the church incorporated?	yes	yes
(5) Is the church in good standing with the Secretary of State's Office? Attach Certificate	no	yes
(6) Is the church a 501 (c)(3) or other number under the IRS? If so, is there evidence that the new 990 rule has been satisfied?	no	yes
(7) Does the pastor receive any compensation?	no	no
(8) How many churches are in the immediate community (witin 5 miles) ?	5	3
(9) What is the condition of the facility?	disrepair; not up to code	leased facility/good
(10) Can insurance be obtained on the facility?	no	owner carries
(11) Is insurance maintainted on the building and contents ?	no	contents
(12) What is the value of the land, building, and contents?	$12,000	N/A
(13) What is the total amount of budgets required to paid to the Texas Conference?	$4,500	0
(14) What percentage and amount of the budgets have been paid in the 2 years? Original Obigation.	20%/$900/$8,000	0
(15) Are there ministry opportunities or possibilities in the current context?	unsure	yes
(16) Briefly describe those ministry opportunities.	undertermined	undetermined
(17) Is any resistence anticipated over a potential closure? How many?	Yes/2	yes/10
(18) How many accessions were reported in the last 5 years?	0	30
(19) What is the frequency of the services?	2nd and 4th Sunday	every Sunday
(20) Leadership Profile (Has leader voluntarily submitted a plan for the vision of the church?)	no	no
(21) Are there any other non-profit purposes than can be met in this commnity? (chairatible, religious, literary, scientific, etc.,)	Charitiable	Chariatible

Crossroads Community Development Corporation

802 H Texas Parkway, Stafford Texas 77477

Checklist

Officer Signature _____

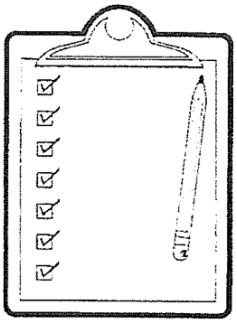
Check	Action	Reason	Result	Corrective Action	Document
√	Taxable Entity Search/Texas Controller	Check Non-Profit Status	Active/OK	None Required	Yes (copy of Internet page proof)
√	State Tax Exemptions	Ensure proper tax exemptions	OK	None Required	Yes (letter obtained as proof)
√	IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search	Check 501 (c) (3) Status	No Listing	File 501 (c) (3) Designation	Checked IRS Website
√	Checked IRS Master Data	Check 501 (c) (3) Status	No Listing	File 501 (c) (3) Designation	Downloaded List (not found)
√	Checked IRS Most Recent Publication 78	Check 501 (c) (3) Listing	No listing	File 501 (c) (3) Designation	Downloaded List (not found)
√	Check IRS 990 e- Postcard Filings	Check 501 (c) (3) Listing	No listing	File 501 (c) (3) Designation	Downloaded List (not found)
√	Check IRS Revocation List	Check 501 (c) (3) Listing	No Listing	File 501 (c) (3) Designation	Downloaded List (not found)
√	Secretary of State Check for review of Articles of Incorporation	To obtain legal document	Document obtained	Amend to include IRS affordable housing language, if necessary	Copy of Articles (Purchased/in file)
√	Secretary of State Check for review of Periodic Notices	To ensure notice filed to prevent forfeiture	Located	Current Notice needs to be filed; not filed since 2008	Notice (old and new notice in file)
√	Secretary of State Check to review management on file	In order to Update Periodic Report	Document obtained	Update and file new Periodic Report	Pulled and reviewed management document
√	Submitted new 1023 Application to IRS	Designation had been revoked in 2006 under new law to file 990 each year	Prepared and submitted new 1023 designation	Reinstated Crossroads Community Development Corporation	Awaiting New IRS Determination Letter
√	Made multiple calls to IRS following status	To determine the date the new designation was approved	Went into review as of Sept 5th	None Required	Awaiting New IRS Determination Letter
√	Call to IRS regarding Rev. Proc. 96-32	To determine if still effective	Spoke with Mr. Martin I D #1000571502	Procedure still in effect if it has not been superseded and is still on the IRS Website	Located the guidelines and will amend the Articles of Incorporation to include specific housing language
√	Purchase Notebooks, Make Covers and Spines	To include all relevant documents	purchased	Incorporate all documents	Done
√	Purchase Misc. including USB Drive	Place Logo on USB Drive (Transparent Logos included	Done	Place in 3 hole pouch and included in Notebook	Done
√	Question Addendum on 501	Back years 990 filings	Spoke with Ms. Williams ID @ 1000571797	Crossroads needs to only file going forward	Done

Appendix D

Creating a Vision Statement for Your Church

Creating a Vision Statement for Your Church

Your vision statement should answer the following questions.



1. What do I want my church to become? How do I want it to be regarded in the community at large?

2. What services do I want the church to offer—to members; to the larger community; to the denomination and other churches?

3. Is the space currently available adequate? How will I use the available space until I get the space that is needed?

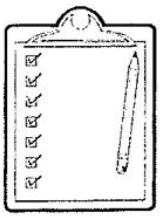
4. Where will teaching, workshops, conferences, etc. be held?

5. How much administrative space do I need?

6. What space will I need to minister to the daily needs of the people?

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING A CHURCH SITE

1. How large is the site? Does it occupy a corner lot?
2. Is the lot zoned for a church building, as well as the activities the church may offer, such as a day care center?
3. Can the site accommodate all of the envisioned features and services, such as parking, landscaping, playground, and outdoor worship areas?



4. Will there be a parking space for every four sittings in the proposed sanctuary if local regulations require parking on the site? Is there convenient street parking or off-street parking that the church might use?
5. Are there at least 2,000 individuals within a 1½ mile radius of the site who are unnerved by a church (1,000 in rural areas or smaller towns)? Is there a church that belongs to your denomination within 1½ miles of the site? What other churches are located within 1½ miles of the site (½ mile in densely populated areas)?
6. Does your nearest denominational church favor or oppose the purchase of the site for your church? Can a comity assignment be secured?
7. Can you reasonably expect to reach at least 400 prospective members?
8. Do you have the results of a recently conducted religious census of the area?
9. Do local residents have similar economic and cultural backgrounds? Do you expect to have diverse language groups within the church?
10. Does the community include transients, renters, or homeowners? What is the average home cost and value in the area? Is the population of the area stable, growing, or declining?
11. Are there nearby shopping centers and elementary, junior or high schools?
12. Is easily accessible public transportation to the site available?
13. If the site coos not already have the necessary public utilities, streets, curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, how much will it cost to have them installed? Are there adequate traffic signals nearby?
14. Can a fee-simple title be secured?
15. Has the property been appraised? Does the asking price reflect prevailing market values?
16. What are the local requirements for building set-back from property lines? Do you have a sketch showing the placement of the various units, which make up the proposed facility?
17. Do local planning authorities project significant changes in the area, such as major highway or subway construction? Is a significant percentage of the land within 11/2 miles of the site undeveloped? Are there plans for future development of the area?
18. Is the site located on heavy truck routes, near a fire station, or in a fly-over area; i.e. commercial, military planes. Is the site close to industrial facilities that are hazardous or emit offensive odors?
19. Are there natural or man-made barriers such as rivers, lakes, gorges, hills, golf courses, parks, cemeteries, railroad tracks, subway lines, large power lines, or industrial areas within the immediate area?
20. Are there storm sewers and other adequate drainage facilities on the site? Does the site receive run-off from adjacent properties? Has the subsurface been assayed to determine if it will provide a safe foundation for a building?
21. Will a church on the site be visible to passers-by? Will people pass the site en route to work, school, shopping, etc.? Are there tall structures next to the property?
22. Has the site been approved by the necessary church governing boards?

Source: This checklist was adapted from *The Building and Care of United Methodist Churches*. by Bonneau P. Murphy (New York: National Division, Board of Missions, United Methodist Church,1969).

Appendix E

Survey: Assessing the Spiritual Health of Your Congregation

ASSESSING THE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF YOUR CONGREGATION

1. Do you feel that you have common points of interest with your fellow church members?

   _____Yes _____ No

2. A central task of community is to become a place safe enough for each of us to own our brokenness. (178) Do you feel a safe environment to explore this in your church community?

   _____Yes _____ No

3. When your life becomes messy and you cannot see through the fog, is your church a place where you can come and find help getting back on track?(178)

   _____Yes _____ No

4. People who make up a spiritual community have taken their place as sick people, found the cure, and now long to spread the news that broken people can live. (179) Does that sound like your church?

   _____Yes _____ No

5. Competence to care for souls and to cure them, to nurture the work of the Spirit in another's life, depends first on spiritual maturity, on the depth of the helper's communion with God. (180) Do you sense a call to this work for your pastor or spiritual director?

   _____Yes _____ No

6. The passion to worship needs an opportunity for release. (112) Are there opportunities for your heart to be stirred during worship?

   _____Yes _____ No

7. James says "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face many trials." Every bit of suffering is perfectly suited to honor our deep desire to become really good people, solid people, like Jesus. (114-115) Is this attitude toward the trials of life as unique opportunity to grow nurtured at your church?

   _____Yes _____ No

8. When we fail a test against sin, it deepens our appreciation of grace. Could you confess the sin, but more importantly, the desire to stick with the Lord, and feel acceptance and love at your church? (115)

   _____Yes _____ No

[Adapted from *Becoming a True Spiritual Community: A Profound Vision of What the Church Can Be* by Larry Crabb (1999)]

Appendix F

Characteristics of an Effective Smaller Church

SURVEY --- CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SMALLER CHURCH

The following practices are thought to be helpful in helping a congregation be more what God is calling it to be. Imagine and strategize how each could be manifested in our congregation.

1. Prioritize worship. Worship has to be a priority. It has to be rich and more vital. What can you do to strengthen your worship?

- Come frequently every Sunday
- Participate and volunteer for additional duties
- Study more, read more, surround myself with like minds on Jesus
- Incorporate technology. Actually, talk about worship.
- Prayer focus on church worship and new life (Holy Spirit) in church.
- Study the world with intentionality, mediating on His word and God daily and on a consistent basis.
- Include the youth
- Expand
- Attend more worship-filled activities – bible study, Sunday school, worship services, meetings that encourage us to become more involved

2. Take advantage of your size. We should never be embarrassed by our smaller size; rather, we should take advantage of our size. How could you take advantage of your size?

- In related worship events (Conference, Connectional, etc.)
- Church is a good size; everyone is familiar.
- Seek opportunity to get others to come to worship and possibly join the church
- Small size should mean better efficiency. Can use small size to make impact in areas where we excel
- By simply doing what you can (missions, tithing, etc.) A small church can be very impactful.
- Few people screaming will be heard over many silent
- Work harder on church growth and appreciate knowing all my Sisters and Brothers in Christ and their families.
- We grow together. Size should not be a factor. Great things come from small beginnings
- Hug more ?
- Embrace it
- Conduct programs and missions in our building; prepare it for the future coffee house church

3. **Kindle a family spirit.** In an effective small church, there is a strong family spirit and a close and caring community. How can we church take better care of one another and deepen the relationship among everyone?

4. **Have fun.** In effective faith communities, the members really enjoyed one another and have great fun together. How can members be helped to enjoy one another even more and have more fun together?

5. **Commit to mission.** In effective churches, there is a serious, passionate commitment to mission, addressing serious needs and issues beyond the church doors. What could you do to develop or expand a deeper commitment to mission and service here?

6. **Find your distinctive niche.** Effective smaller congregations know they cannot be all things to all people, but find and define their particular niche and fill it. What is our distinctive niche, and how can we better fulfill it?

7. **Strengthen your pastor's leadership.** Effective, small churches have trusted pastoral leaders (young and old, lay and ordained, part-time and full-time), and most had been in place for several years. What can you do to maximize the relationship with your pastor and, if possible, extend it?

8. **Deepen the effectiveness of laity.** In all these places, there was a committed core of laity. Knowing that every congregation is dependent on its membership, what can be done to take laity to a deeper level of faithfulness, purpose, and effectiveness?

9. **Deploy resources wisely.** I don't believe any of these congregations were wealthy, but they all knew how to generate enough money to do what they wanted and needed to do. How might your congregation do more with what it has and generate more resources?

10. **Thrive! Don't just survive.** All of these places were more concerned with being a living church than a surviving organization. What would move your congregation beyond merely a survival mentality to becoming a contagious, vibrant faith community?

11. **Nurture a passionate faith.** Last and most important, in each place there was real commitment to spiritual nurturing and faith development. What steps could your church take to help people, young and old, become more passionate about their faith?

A smaller church that applies itself to realizing these common denominators is sure to be a dynamic, faithful, and effective church that has no need to apologize and will be a vital organ in the Body of Christ.

Appendix G

The Washington Post: Acts of Faith Articles

THE WASHINGTON POST

Acts of Faith Articles

September 11, 2018	*Looking for atonement in a shameless time* by Julie Zauzmer
September 9, 2018	*As Jews enter the Days of Atonement, some look far and wide for examples of repentance in public life* by Julie Zauzmer
August 24, 2018	*Reinventing religion – with romance novels* by Kimberly Winston
August 19, 2018	*"Wasted our lives" Catholic sex abuse scandals again prompt a crisis of faith* by Julie Zauzmer, Michelle Boorstein & Michael Brice-Saddler
August 6, 2018	*No sermons at this church: Congregants wander silent and barefoot through nature at Church of the Wild* by Hannah Natanson
July 27, 2018	*An online church for gamers: VA Pastor draws thousands to worship on Twitch* by Hannah Natanson
July 18, 2018	*A Virgin Mary statue has been 'weeping' olive oil. Church leaders can't explain it* by Lindsey Bever
June 18, 2018	*Why many white evangelicals are not protesting family separations on the U.S. border* by Michelle Boorstein and Julie Zauzmer
June 5, 2018	*'This world is a better place without her': A family's savage final send-off to their mother* by Cleve R. Wootson Jr.
April 10, 2018	*What it looks like to de-Americanize the gospel* by Wes Granberg-Michaelson
December 29, 2017	*Does your New Year's resolution involve prayer? Find 4 ways to kick-start your prayer life* by David Van Biema
November 21, 2017	*This church has a warning for visitors: 'WE ARE HEAVILY ARMED – The Pastors'* by Marwa Eltagouri
November 17, 2017	*Man accidentally shoots himself and his wife at a church, shortly after a discussion on shootings* by Marwa Eltagouri
October 16, 2017	*#MeToo: I was raped by my pastor* by Halee Gray Scott
March 25, 2017	*Oklahoma Lawmaker defends pregnancy from rape and incest as*

	'beauty from ashes' by Kristine Phillips
March 24, 2017	*When a Jew does it* by Rabbi Joshua Hammerman
February 18, 2017	*'Jane Roe' made abortion legal. Then a minister made her rethink. Remembering Norma McCorvey: From 'Jane Roe to abortion activist'* by Avi Selk
February 10, 2017	*Franklin Graham said immigration is 'not a Bible issue'. Here's what the Bible says* by Joel Baden
January 31, 2017	*A fire destroyed this Texas mosque. Thousands have chipped in to help rebuild it* by Sarah Larimer
January 3, 2017	*Evangelicals should be deeply troubled by Donald Trump's attempt to mainstream heresy* by Michael Horton
December 12, 2016	*'Kids, there is no Santa': Pastor unloads on families waiting to take Christmas photos at a mall* by Cleve R. Wootson, Jr.
December 5, 2016	*The Dakota Access Pipeline isn't just about the environment. It's about religion* by Sarah Pulliam Bailey
November 3, 2016	*Black church torched in Mississippi with 'Vote Trump' painted on wall* by Cleve R. Wootson, Jr.
September 8, 2016	*I'm a 32-year-old virgin, and I'm living the feminist dream* by Kate Bryan
August 26, 2016	*Where in the Bible does it say you can't be transgender? Nowhere.* by Eliel Cruz
August 15, 2016	*To Clinton and Trump, it's all about the middle class. To Jesus, it's about the poor* by Ryan McAnnally-Linz and Miroslav Volf (opinion piece)
August 3, 2016	*Pope Francis says it's 'terrible' that children are taught they can choose their own gender* by Julie Zauzmer
August 2, 2016	*'There isn't really anything magical about it': Why more millennials are avoiding* sex by Tara Bahrampour
August 2, 2016	*'It could be a world-changing decision,' member of new Vatican committee on female deacons says* by Julie Zauzmer
July 27, 2016	*'I kissed dating goodbye' told me to stay pure until marriage. I still have a stain on my heart* by Liz Lenz.

June 17, 2016	*A year later, families of the Charleston shooting victims still wrestle with forgiveness* by Bob Smietana
June 14, 2016	*Tips for helping a loved one after a tragedy, from a Christian disaster expert* by Jamie Aten
June 7, 2016	*Ten unholy reasons I take my toddler to church* by Melissa Richeson
May 24, 2016	*Pope Francis embraces the grand iman of Al-Azhar* by Julie Zauzmer
May 12, 2016	*Pope Francis discussed the possibility of women deacons. Which other religions have female clergy?* by Julie Zauzmer
April 19, 2016	*What men and women wanted in a spouse in 1939 – and how different it is today* by Ana Swanson
April 14, 2016	*When a tiny church houses three religions* by Susan Katz Miller
April 12, 2016	*Pope Francis has an unusually positive view of sex* by Julie Hanlon Rubio
April 8, 2016	*Pope Francis offers hope to divorced Catholics, says no to gay marriage* by Anthony Faiola & Michelle Boorstein
February 29, 2016	*Why exit pollsters desperately need to get religion* by Brian Kaylor
December 31, 2015	*2015 clarified the right to gay marriage. It opened a world of questions for religious objectors* by Michelle Boorstein
September 2, 2015	*Vast majority of US Catholics who left the church can't imagine returning study says* by Abby Ohlheiser
July 15, 2015	*Yes, many Christian communities are toxic for my LBGT friends. But there's more* by Wesley Hill (opinion piece)
June 26, 2015	*Why the church should neither cave nor panic about the decision on gay marriage* by Russell Moore
June 26, 2015	*Why the Supreme Court decision on gay marriage represents a newera for evangelicals* by Collin Hansen (opinion piece)
June 23, 2015	*My father was a victim of a mass shooting. Here's why forgiveness offers freedom from hate* by Raghvinder Singh

June 22, 2015	*Black America should stop forgiving white racists. Quick absolution does not lead to justice* by Stacey Patton
June 22, 2015	*America will only end racism when it stops being racist* by Eugene Robinson (opinion piece)

Appendix H

Visions AME Church Community Center Survey / Architectural Plans

VISIONS

Developing Fruit for the Kingdom

VISIONS AME CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER

15945 GATEBRIAR DRIVE, MISSOURI CITY TX 77489

APRIL 16, 2019

CSIX ARCHITECTURE®

GENERAL NOTES:

1.) BEARINGS SHOWN HEREON ARE BASED ON THE TEXAS STATE PLANE COORDINATE SYSTEM, SOUTH CENTRAL ZONE, 4204, NAD 83 (2001 ADJ.) AS DETERMINED FROM CITY OF HOUSTON CONTROL MONUMENT 5050-1506. ALL COORDINATES ARE GRID. ALL DISTANCES ARE SURFACE AND CAN BE CONVERTED TO GRID BY MULTIPLYING BY THE COMBINED SCALE FACTOR OF 0.999873225.

2.) ALL OF THE TRACT SHOWN HEREON LIES WITHIN ZONE X (UNSHADED) DEFINED AS AREAS DETERMINED TO BE OUTSIDE THE 500-YEAR FLOODPLAIN FLOODWAY AND FLOOD PLAIN LIMITS SHOWN HEREON ARE APPROXIMATE AND HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY SCALING THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP (FIRM) MAP NO. 48201C*0985L FOR HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS AND INCORPORATED AREAS, DATED REVISED JUNE 18, 2007, AND HAS NOT BEEN FIELD VERIFIED. THIS FLOOD STATEMENT DOES NOT IMPLY THAT THE REMAINING PROPERTY AND/OR STRUCTURES THEREON WILL BE FREE FROM FLOODING OR FLOOD DAMAGE. ON RARE OCCASIONS, GREATER FLOODS CAN AND WILL OCCUR AND FLOOD HEIGHTS MAY BE INCREASED BY MAN-MADE OR NATURAL CAUSES.

3.) A METES AND BOUNDS DESCRIPTION OF EVEN DATE WAS PREPARED IN CONJUCTION WITH THIS SURVEY PLAT.

JOHN LAFAYETTE SURVEY
A-280

STREET EASEMENT TO THE PUBLIC
(FONDREN RD., ROW VARIES)
CALLED 3.0545 AC
VOL. 629, PG. 257
F.B.C.D.R.

PARCEL NO. AY12-053
0.0233 ACRE - 1,014 SQ. FT.

(*) VISION A.M.E. CHURCH
CALLED 0.8674 AC
C.F. No. 2006105589
O.P.R.F.B.C.T.

BRIARGATE SECTION EIGHT
SUBDIVISION
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.

(**) CG RESERVE 164 INC.
CALLED 38.8642 AC
C.F. No. 9352131
O.P.R.F.B.C.T.

SILAS WELCH SUBDIVISION
VOL. 1, PG. 4 F.B.C.P.R.

CG RESERVE 164
TEXAS, L.P.
C.F. No. 2007103114
O.P.R.F.B.C.T.

10' WATER LINE CITY
OF HOUSTON ESMT.
VOL. 1826, PAGE 2248
0.0481 AC
O.P.R.F.B.C.T.

COH SURVEY MONUMENT
#5050-1506
X=3,079,535.13
Y=13,779,322.37
ELEV.=70.78'
FND 3 1/2" DIA.
BRASS DISK

POC
X=3,080,033.12
Y=13,779,717.98
FND 1/2" I.R.

POB
X=3,079,867.32
Y=13,779,709.97
SET 5/8" I.R. W/LTRA CAP

SET 5/8" I.R. W/LTRA CAP

FND 5/8" I.R.

N 87°14'06" E 100.90'
10.00'
S 87°14'06" W 100.84'
S 87°14'06" W 166.00'
S 40°35'55" W 510.54'

LOT 77 | LOT 78 | LOT 78 | LOT 79 | LOT 58 | LOT 59 | LOT 60

CENTERLINE OF ROAD

EXIST. ROW | PROP. ROW | 47'-00"

10'

PARCEL NO. AY12-053

PARENT TRACT INSET
N.T.S.

LEGEND

- GUY ANCHOR
- POWER POLE
- SIGN AND POLE (SINGLE)
- FIRE HYDRANT
- WATER VALVE
- WATER METER
- TREE & SHRUB
- GAS METER
- TREE
- IRON PIPE
- LIGHT POLE
- BALLARD/POLE
- MAN HOLE
- CLEANOUT
- OVERHEAD POWER
- PROPERTY LINE

SCALE (IN FEET)
0 20 40 80

SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATE

TO: CITY OF HOUSTON

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS SURVEY WAS MADE ON THE GROUND AND COMPLETED ON OCTOBER 2011. THAT THIS DRAWING CORRECTLY REPRESENTS THE FACTS FOUND AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY AND THAT THIS PROFESSIONAL SERVICE SUBSTANTIALLY CONFORMS TO THE CURRENT TEXAS SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYORS STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR A CATEGORY 1A, CONDITION II SURVEY, AS DESCRIBED IN THE MANUAL OF PRACTICE.

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR
BY:

STATE OF TEXAS
REGISTERED
ROBERT A. LUPHER
4951
PROFESSIONAL
LAND SURVEYOR

NAME: ROBERT A. LUPHER, III
REGISTRATION NO. 4951
DATE: 1-23-2012
REVISED: 1-23-2012

LINA T. RAMEY & ASSOCIATES
2400 AUGUSTA, SUITE 301
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77057
TELE: 713.972.0200
FAX: 713.972.0204

CURVE TABLE					
CURVE	RADIUS	DELTA ANGLE	ARC LENGTH	CHORD LENGTH	CHORD BEARING
C1	1950.00'	00°17'53"	10.15'	10.15'	N 10°27'29" W
C2	2050.00'	00°17'00"	10.14'	10.14'	S 10°06'26" E

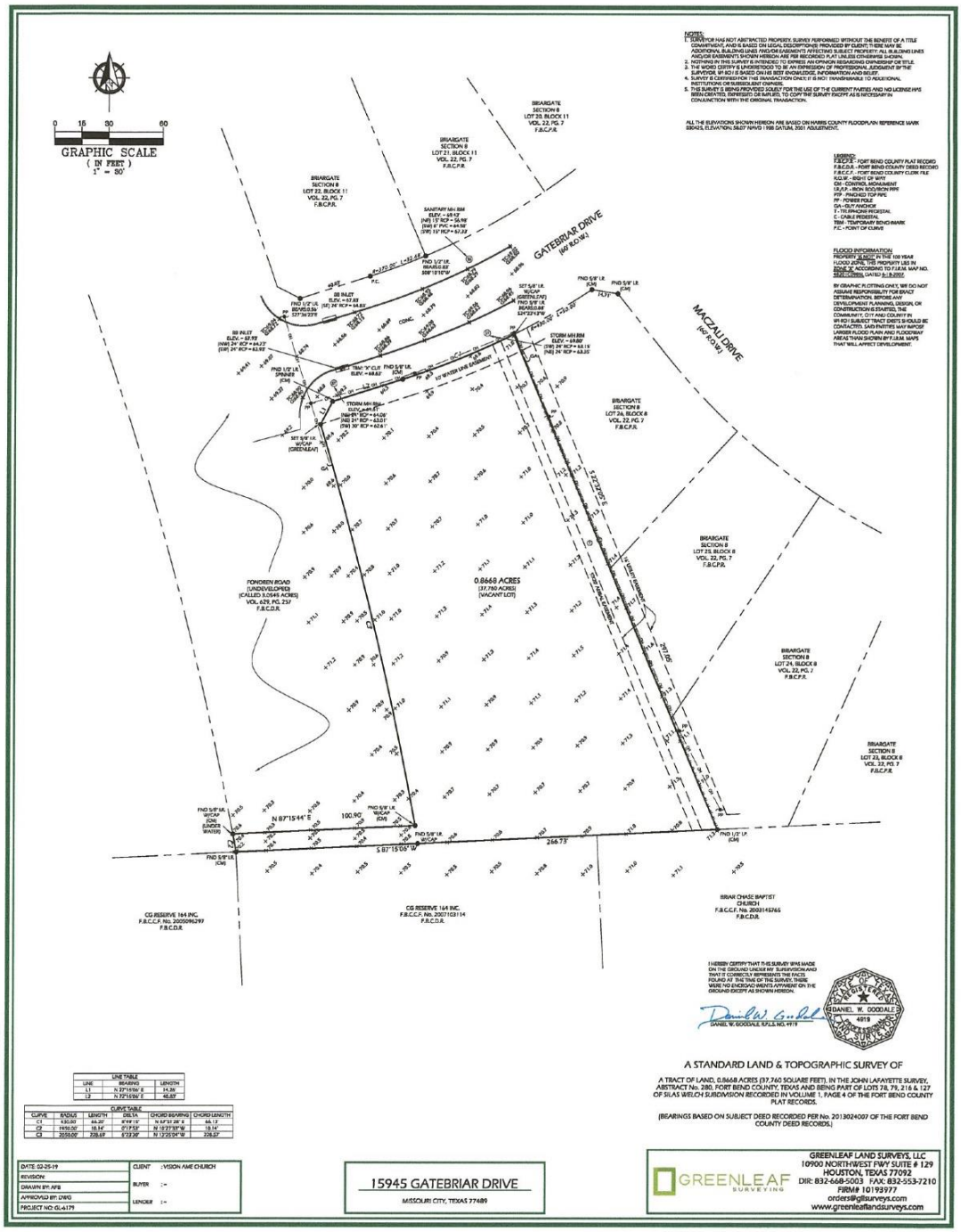
LAND TITLE SURVEY PLAT OF
0.0233 ACRE PARCEL
JOHN LAFAYETTE SURVEY, A-280
HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

CITY OF HOUSTON
PUBLIC WORKS AND
ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

APPROVAL _____ DATE _____

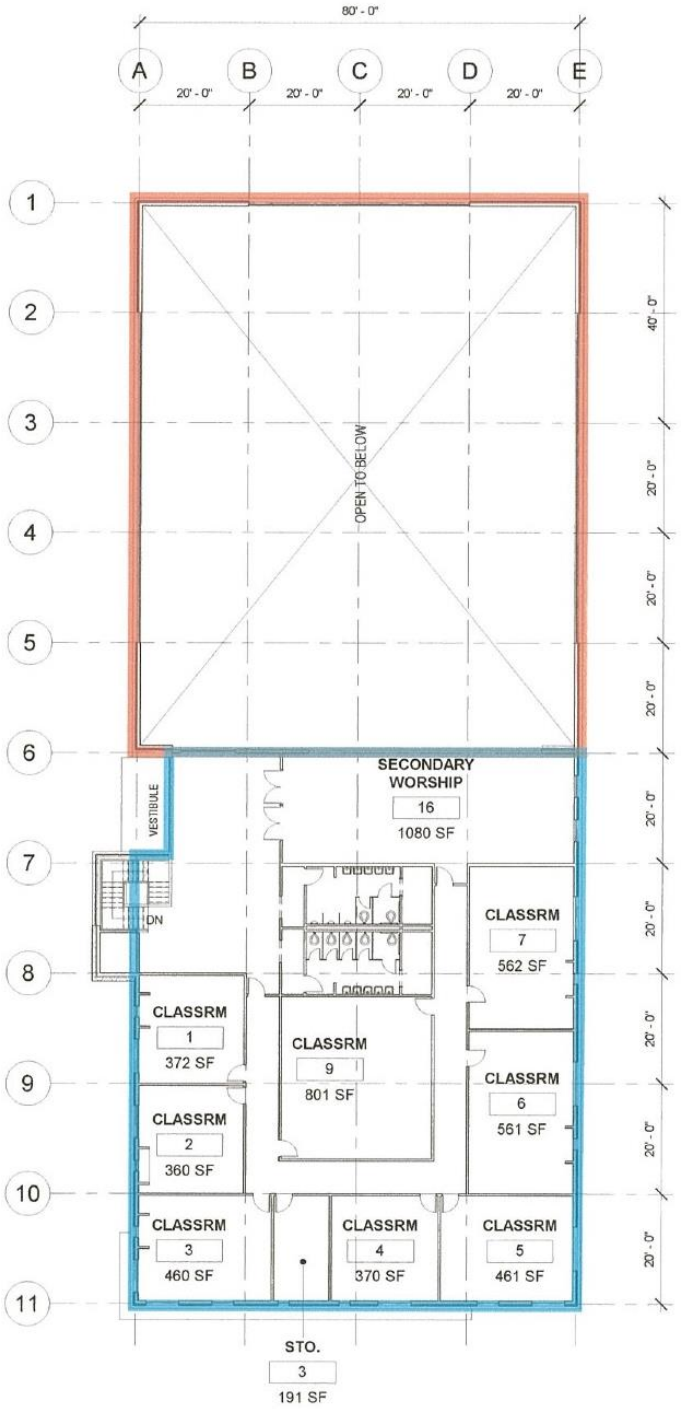
CHIEF SURVEYOR _____ RIGHT OF WAY SECTION

KEY MAP NO. 570Z	GIMS MAP NO. 5050D
PARCEL NO. AY12-053	
SCALE: 1" = 40'	
JOB NO.	
WBS NO.	
C.M. NO.	


GRAPHIC SCALE
(IN FEET)
1" = 30'
GATEBRIAR DRIVE
(60' R.O.W.)
MACZALI DRIVE
(60' R.O.W.)
0.8668 ACRES
(37,760 ACRES)
(VACANT LOT)
PONDEROSA ROAD
(UNDEVELOPED)
(CALLED 3.0549 ACRES)
VOL. 629, PG. 257
F.B.C.D.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 22, BLOCK 11
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 21, BLOCK 11
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 20, BLOCK 11
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 24, BLOCK 8
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 25, BLOCK 8
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
BRIARGATE
SECTION 8
LOT 23, BLOCK 8
VOL. 22, PG. 7
F.B.C.P.R.
CG RESERVE 164 INC.
F.B.C.C.F. No. 2005096297
F.B.C.D.R.
CG RESERVE 164 INC.
F.B.C.C.F. No. 2007103114
F.B.C.D.R.
BRIAR CHASE BAPTIST
CHURCH
F.B.C.C.F. No. 2003145765
F.B.C.D.R.
N 87°15'44" E
100.90'
S 87°15'06" W
266.73'
291.05'
NOTES:
1. SURVEYOR HAS NOT ABSTRACTED PROPERTY. SURVEY PERFORMED WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF A TITLE COMMITMENT, AND IS BASED ON LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED BY CLIENT. THERE MAY BE ADDITIONAL BUILDING LINES AND/OR EASEMENTS AFFECTING SUBJECT PROPERTY; ALL BUILDING LINES AND/OR EASEMENTS SHOWN HEREON ARE PER RECORDED PLAT, UNLESS OTHERWISE SHOWN.
2. NOTHING IN THIS SURVEY IS INTENDED TO EXPRESS AN OPINION REGARDING OWNERSHIP OR TITLE.
3. THE LOCATION OF UTILITIES SHOWN HEREON ARE BASED ON VISIBLE EVIDENCE AND/OR AS MARKED BY THE SURVEYOR. MY BODY IS BASED ON MY BEST KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF.
4. SURVEY IS CERTIFIED FOR THIS TRANSACTION ONLY; IT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE TO ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OR SUBSEQUENT OWNERS.
5. THIS SURVEY IS BEING PROVIDED SOLELY FOR THE USE OF THE CURRENT PARTIES AND NO LICENSES HAVE BEEN CREATED, EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED, TO COPY THE SURVEY EXCEPT AS NECESSARY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ORIGINAL TRANSACTION.
ALL THE ELEVATIONS SHOWN HEREON ARE BASED ON HARRIS COUNTY FLOODPLAIN REFERENCE MARK 93042, ELEVATION: 58.07 NAVD 1988 DATUM, 2001 ADJUSTMENT.
LEGEND:
F.B.C.P.R. - FORT BEND COUNTY PLAT RECORDS
F.B.C.D.R. - FORT BEND COUNTY DEED RECORDS
F.B.C.C.F. - FORT BEND COUNTY CLERK FILE
R.O.W. - RIGHT OF WAY
CM - CONTROL MONUMENT
I.R./I.P. - IRON ROD/IRON PIPE
P.P. - PINCHED TOP PIPE
PP - POWER POLE
D/H - DUTY HYDRANT
T - TELEPHONE PEDESTAL
C - CABLE PEDESTAL
TBM - TEMPORARY BENCH MARK
P.C. - POINT OF CURVE
FLOOD INFORMATION
PROPERTY IS NOT IN THE 100 YEAR FLOOD ZONE, THIS PROPERTY LIES IN ZONE "X" ACCORDING TO F.I.R.M. MAP NO. 48157C0170L DATED 6-18-2007
BY GRAPHIC PLOTTING ONLY, WE DO NOT ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXACT DETERMINATION, BEFORE ANY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, DESIGN, OR CONSTRUCTION IS STARTED, THE COMMUNITY, CITY AND COUNTY IN WHICH SUBJECT TRACT EXISTS SHOULD BE CONTACTED. SAID ENTITIES MAY IMPOSE LARGER FLOOD PLAIN AND FLOODWAY AREA THAN SHOWN BY F.I.E.M. MAPS THAT WILL AFFECT DEVELOPMENT.
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS SURVEY WAS MADE ON THE GROUND UNDER MY SUPERVISION AND THAT IT CORRECTLY REPRESENTS THE FACTS FOUND AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEY. THERE ARE NO ENCROACHMENTS APPARENT ON THE GROUND EXCEPT AS SHOWN HEREON.
DANIEL W. GOODALE
4919
DANIEL W. GOODALE R.P.L.S. NO. 4919
REGISTERED
PROFESSIONAL
LAND SURVEYOR
STATE OF TEXAS
A STANDARD LAND & TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF
A TRACT OF LAND, 0.8668 ACRES (37,760 SQUARE FEET), IN THE JOHN LAFAYETTE SURVEY, ABSTRACT No. 280, FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS AND BEING PART OF LOTS 78, 79, 216 & 127 OF SILAS WELCH SUBDIVISION RECORDED IN VOLUME 1, PAGE 4 OF THE FORT BEND COUNTY PLAT RECORDS.
(BEARINGS BASED ON SUBJECT DEED RECORDED PER No. 2013024097 OF THE FORT BEND COUNTY DEED RECORDS.)
LINE TABLE
LINE | BEARING | LENGTH
L1 | N 87°15'06" E | 34.86'
L2 | N 72°15'06" E | 48.69'
CURVE TABLE
CURVE | RADIUS | LENGTH | DELTA | CHORD BEARING | CHORD LENGTH
C1 | 930.00' | 46.26' | 2°49'13" | N 58°37'28" E | 46.12'
C2 | 1950.00' | 18.14' | 0°31'59" | N 72°27'51" E | 18.14'
C3 | 2050.00' | 726.69' | 20°18'28" | N 72°05'04" E | 226.37'
DATE: 02-25-19
REVISION:
DRAWN BY: APB
APPROVED BY: DWG
PROJECT NO: GL-4179
CLIENT : VISION AME CHURCH
BUYER :-
LENDER :-
15945 GATEBRIAR DRIVE
MISSOURI CITY, TEXAS 77489
GREENLEAF SURVEYING
GREENLEAF LAND SURVEYS, LLC
10900 NORTHWEST FWY SUITE # 129
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77092
DIR: 832-668-5003 FAX: 832-553-7210
FIRM# 10193977
orders@glisurveys.com
www.greenleaflandsurveys.com

VISIONS
Developing Fruit for the Kingdom
Phase 1 - Fellowship Hall
Phase 3 - Worship Center / Gymnasium
CSIX ARCHITECTURE
VISIONS AME CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER
Floor Plan - Level 1
80' - 0"
A
B
C
D
E
20' - 0"
200' - 0"
GYMNASIUM
17
7807 SF
NURSERY
8
746 SF
UP
OFFICE
11
207 SF
OFFICE
12
216 SF
PASTOR
13
314 SF
FELLOWSHIP
15
2217 SF
STO.
14
230 SF
KITCHEN
10
538 SF

VISIONS
Developing Fruit for the Kingdom

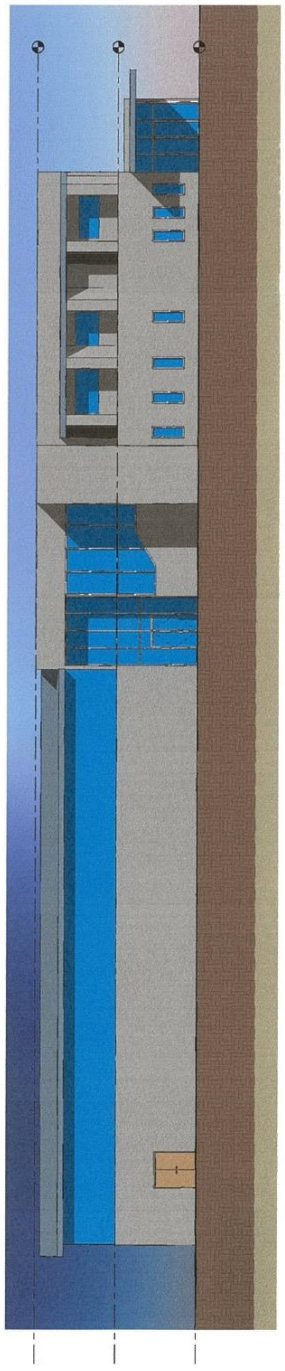


Phase 2 - Classrooms
Phase 3 - Worship Center / Gymnasium

CSIX ARCHITECTURE©

Floor Plan - Level 2

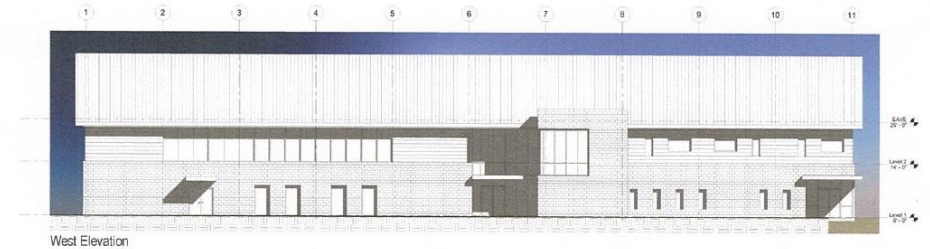
VISIONS AME CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER



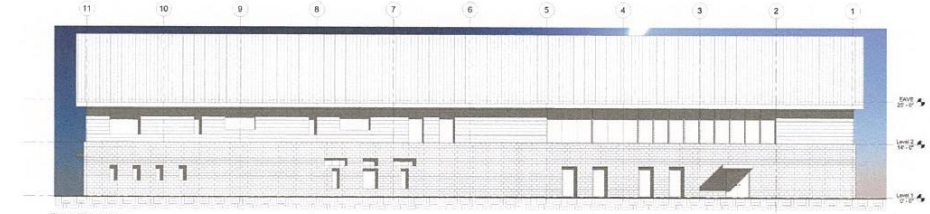
WEST BUILDING ELEVATION

CSIX ARCHITECTURE®

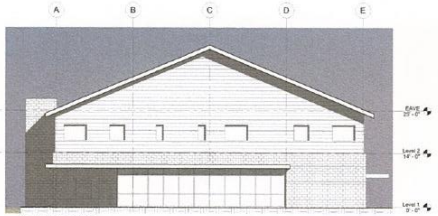
VISIONS
Developing Fruit for the Kingdom



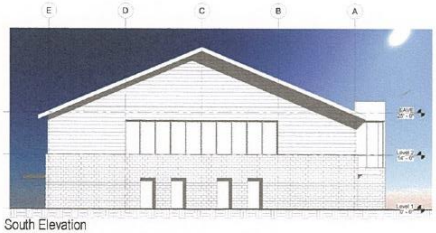
West Elevation



East Elevation



North Elevation



South Elevation

VISIONS AME CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER

CSIX ARCHITECTURE©

VISIONS
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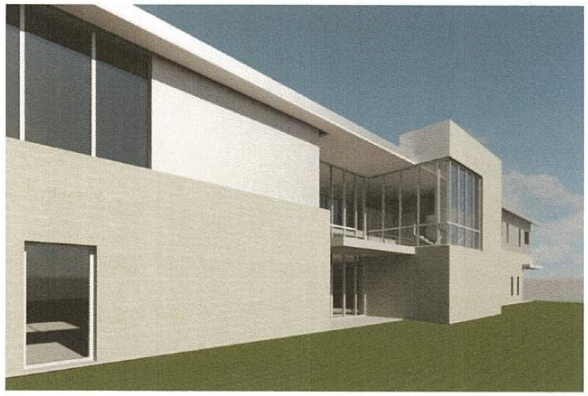
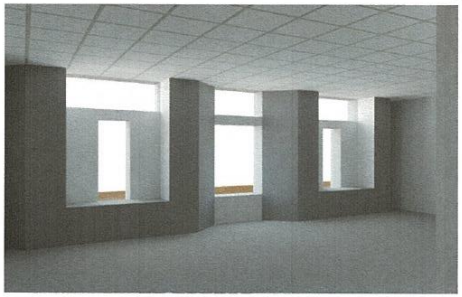


Building Entry

Building Lobby

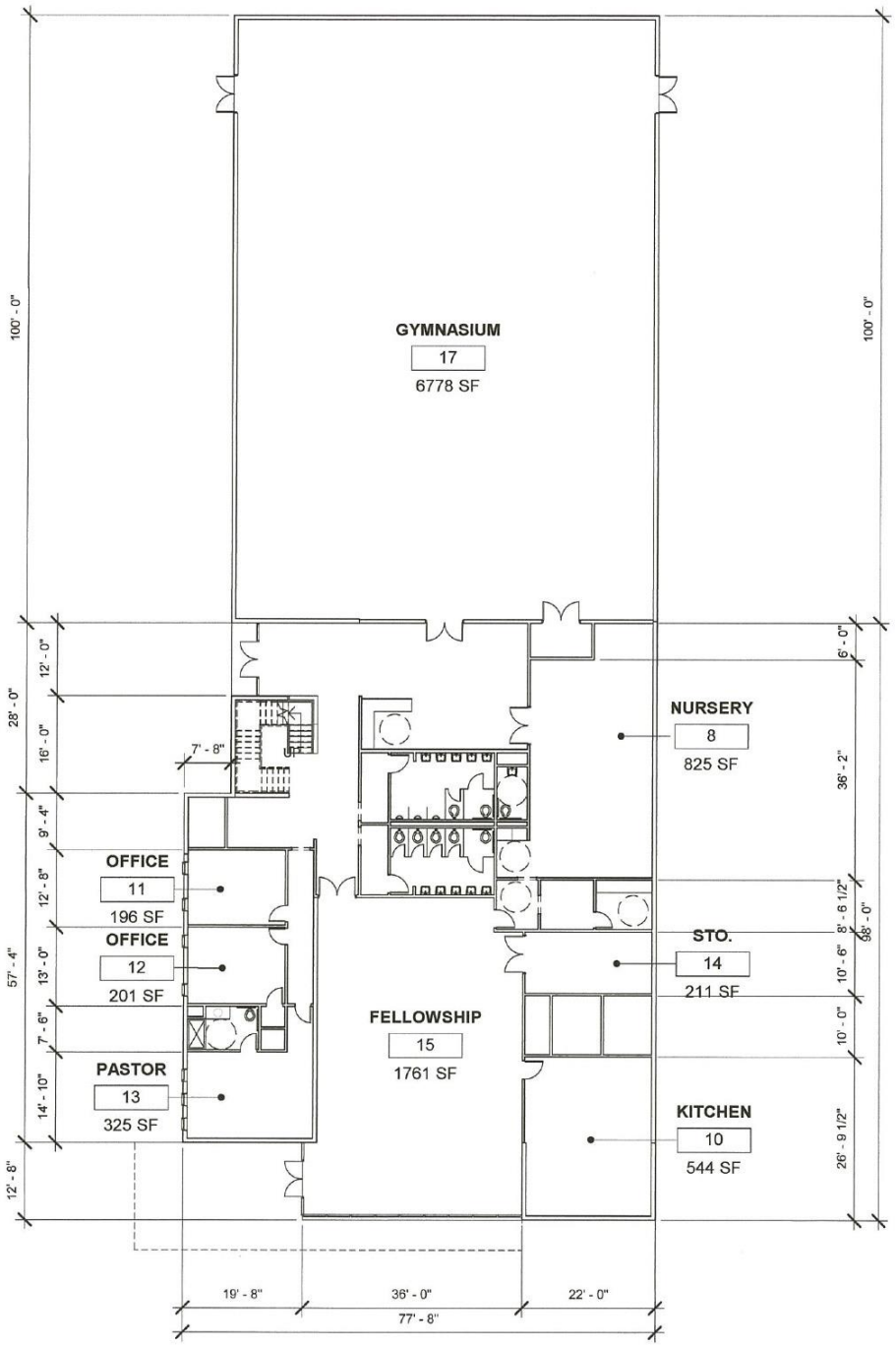
Fellowship Hall



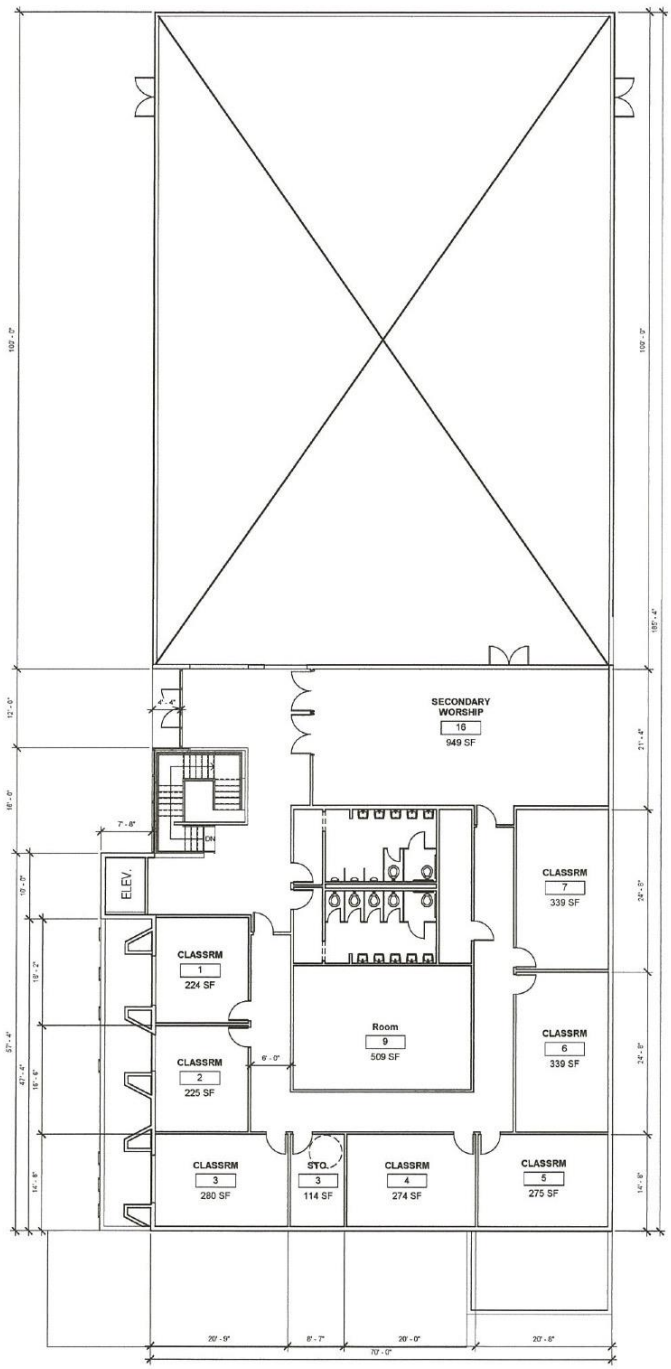
Nursery

VISIONS AME CHURCH COMMUNITY CENTER

CSIX ARCHITECTURE®



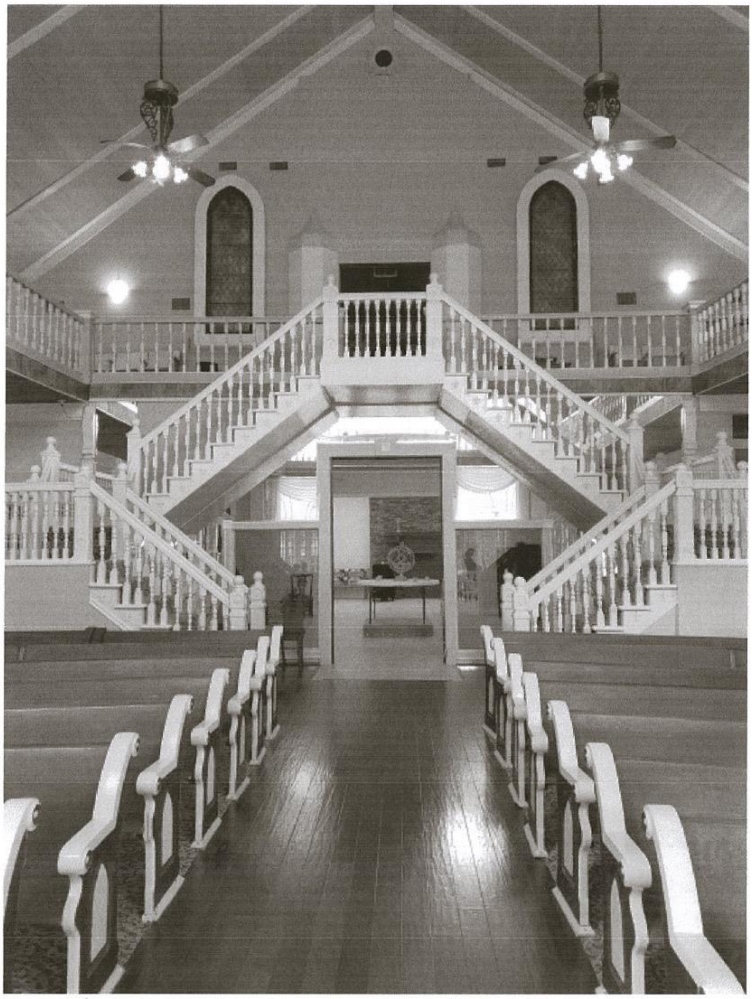
FLOOR 1 FLOOR PLAN



FLOOR 2 FLOOR PLAN

Appendix I

Worship Venue: Heaven on Earth, Missouri City



Appendix J

Prosperity Bank Pre-Submission Document

CHURCH LOAN QUESTIONNAIRE

The following data gathering exercise is designed to assist you with your plans for increasing your facilities. Prosperity Bank very much desires to assist you with the program and your ministry. We believe this will be an excellent tool in assisting you in planning financially for the project.

I. GENERAL

a. Legal name of organization: _____

b. Legal structure: _____

c. Tax ID (if applicable): _____

d. Inception date of organization: _____

e. At current location since what year: _____

f. Were you "split off" from another congregation? If so, name of previous church:

_____

g. Are you a member of or affiliated with a denomination body? If so, which body and how is it organized?:

_____

h. Mailing address: _____

_____

_____

i. Phone number: _____

j. Primary contact person (people): _____

i. phone number(s):

_____

ii. e-mail address(es):

_____

k. Number of worship services held each week:

_____

i. Days and times:

l. Seating capacity of current facility: _____

II. CONGREGATION

a. Projected Membership/Family Units

	Membership	**Family Units**
2013		
2014		
2015		

b. When was your membership list last purged? _____

c. Please give us a breakdown of your current membership by age:

	0-10	11-17	18-25	26-40	40-50	50-60	60+
Number							
Percentage							

III. CONCENTRATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

a. Are the top 10 major givers/families identified? _____

b. Please show the individual amounts given by your top 10 givers for the most recent fiscal year.

	Amount given	Member since
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

9		
10		
Total		

c. Are there factors identified which could influence their future giving in a negative manner? _____

_____

Prosperity Bank does not request the names of givers and information concerning them unless the group represents a material percentage of your annual budget (25%+) or are significantly linked together in another manner (e.g., all one family). Is the data available and is there a need to focus on the data?

_____

IIII. EXISTING DEBT STRUCTURE

a. Is there existing debt on above property? _____

i. If so, to whom is this debt owed?

_____

ii. How much is owed currently?

_____

iii. What are the terms of this debt?

1. Original amount borrowed: _____

2. Interest rate (fixed, floating?):

_____

3. Maturity: _____

4. Amortization: _____

iiii. What is the collateral for this debt?:

_____

b. If you are planning to sell existing property, what is expected sales price? _____

i. Of this amount, how much will be contributed to the new project?

_____

V. BUILDING FUND

a. Are you/will you be involved in a special fundraising campaign for the project? _____

a. What is the expected duration of the proposed construction project? _____

b. Proposed size (sf) of building to be constructed? _____

c. Acreage of land for proposed project: _____

d. Legal description of land for proposed project: _____

_____

e. Was land for proposed project purchased previously? _____

i. If so, what was purchase price?

_____

ii. Is there money currently owed on the land?

1. If so, to whom is this debt owed? _____

2. How much is owed currently?

_____

3. What are the terms of this debt?

a. Original amount borrowed: _____

b. Interest rate (fixed, floating?): _____

c. Maturity: _____

d. Amortization: _____

f. Where are the nearest associated churches and how far are they from the location of your project?

_____

_____

g. What is estimated cost of construction? (please provide detailed cost breakdown)

_____

PROPOSED PROJECT (Continued)

h. Who will be the general contractor? (please provide list of projects/contact information (including type, size, location), trade references, bank reference)

_____

i. If so, when did the campaign begin or when is it scheduled to begin?

_____

ii. Over what period of time is/was the campaign scheduled?

_____

iii. If campaign has begun, what was amount pledged?

_____

iiii. Do you have a consulting company assisting you on your pledge drive? If so, which one? Are they being paid a flat fee or a percentage of contributions?

_____

_____

_____

V. Annual Contributions to Building Fund

	Total contrib. to Bldg. Fund	**% of Total Budget**
2013 Actual		
2014 Actual		
2015 Actual		
2016 Budgeted		
YTD ___/___/2016(annualized)		

vi. Do any pledges exceed $25,000 or 10% of the total pledges (whichever is less)? If so, please list each.

_____

_____

_____

VI. PROPOSED PROJECT

i. Will the project be bonded? _____

j. Is the zoning acceptable for your project, or will you need to go before your local planning and zoning board for approval of your project?

_____

_____

k. Please provide insurance quote for proposed facilities. _____

l. Please provide utilities quote for proposed facilities. _____

VII. PROPOSED DEBT

a. What is amount of loan request? _____

b. Over what length of time do you want the proposed loan to be amortized? _____

c. Sources of funds

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

d. Uses of funds

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

VIII. STAFF

a. Name of head clergyman: _____

i. Length of time with organization (since what year):

_____

ii. Formal Training: _____

iii. Full or part-time: _____

iiii. Age of head clergyman: _____

V. Where would the church go to replace the head clergyman if he leaves: _____

b. Names and positions of other staff clergymen:

_____

_____

_____

_____

IX. EXISTING FACILITIES

a. What is size of existing facilities (sf of buildings)? _____

b. What is size of existing land (acreage)? _____

c. What is legal description of property? _____

_____

d. Brief description of existing facilities (e.g., 200-seat sanctuary, 10 classrooms, gymnasium, 3 offices, 4 restrooms, etc.)

_____

_____

Appendix K

Project Narrative Proposal

Evaluating the Readiness of a Small African Methodist Episcopal Church to Build a Facility for Worship and Community Service

Project Narrative Proposal

The subject of this study is the readiness of Visions African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church to embark on a building project of a Family Life Center in an existing older subdivision in the Southwest Houston/Missouri City area. This student has observed a lack of definitive guidance from the denomination in the preconstruction feasibility phase, so necessary for the successful construction of twenty-first century ministry space. While the local pastor, local trustees, and congregation are responsible for the details of the work, some additional recommended input, inclusive of needs assessment, fiscal preparedness, debt liquidation planning, and ministry focuses for the community surrounding the site post-construction, need to be address in a systematic, instructive, reproducible process.

After several informal discussions with church officers, it became apparent that there were varying views concerning the utility of a church edifice, as it relates to the worship space, flexible ministry spaces, dining areas, and classrooms/offices. Friendly debates were entertained over the perceived needs and furnishings. For instance, use of traditional pews and their appeal over stackable cushioned sanctuary chairs, or providing a fully functioning kitchen verses a non-cooking serving area, or expandable classrooms verses office space. This dichotomy presented an excellent opportunity to begin some

theological discussion defining the church. Clarity from a Kingdom of God perspective will influence the decisions pertaining to the possible construction of an edifice and/or church complex, providing clarity and, perhaps, consensus. Preparation of an instrument that addresses some of the practical considerations will prevent costly overruns, wasted resources, and chances for interruption of the work. Items for consideration that would compose this feasibility study include site selection, bank selection, and funding constraints, municipality constraints pre- and post-construction, building plans and construction materials, anticipated costs, and reasonable contingency/overrun costs. A well-designed instrument will be tested for this project and made available for other churches considering construction.

The primary work of the church, which is ministering to the needs of others, also needs to be addressed in a concise manner prior to construction. To neglect this facet may lead to an attractive new facility with a hefty mortgage note each month, but no parishioners or new worshipers. Well-designed ministries, based on assessment of the neighborhood near the site area can positively impact the surrounding community for future construction activities, and should be in place and funded as a part of the planning process. Preparation of the leadership for embracing new congregants and new believers, as well as sharing in their training, should be evaluated, honed, and solidified. Commitment to the process will be needed from the congregation; therefore, opportunities for inclusiveness in the process will be strategically presented. Intentional prayer support from planning stages to completion should be undertaken by a committed, organized group of intercessors. Divine interventions and heavenly guidance are always welcome, necessary, and foundational for Kingdom purposes.

Ministry Setting

Visions AME Church was organized in 1994, in Missouri City, Texas, at the home of the Founder. The Church held Bible studies at the home for two and a half years, while celebrating the Sunday worship experience at a Holiday Inn on the Southwest Freeway in Houston, Texas. Currently, the church is holding all activities in a small strip mall on Texas Parkway in Stafford, Texas, and it has been in this location since August 1999. The facility is approximately 2,180 square feet, offering an open theatre-style worship space seating 70-100 persons, a designated altar and pulpit space, a fellowship hall and serving only kitchen, two dual-sex bathrooms (one with a urinal and commode), a protected children's area, a spot for pre-teens, and one office. Most other businesses in the strip mall remain closed on Sunday morning, so parking is adequate. Evening service poses some challenges, but space has been sufficient in the past with the assistance of the ushers/parking attendants. Texas Parkway is a major travel route for persons living in Missouri City or Pearland heading into Houston, and thus provides great visibility.

The Texas Annual Conference quitclaim deeded a 0.8674-acre tract of land to Visions, located in the Briargate Subdivision of southwest Houston.[1] The predominantly black, lower middle class neighborhood, consists of single-family homes built in the early 1970s, most in fair condition. Single mothers lead half of the households, and there are four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school (currently low performing) educating the children in the area. Within a two- to three-mile drive from this location are two established megachurches, namely The Fountain of Praise and New

1. Visions subsequently sold a 0.0233-acre parcel of the tract to the City of Houston on April 2013 in preparation of the Fondren Road completion project, taking the road from the southeastern edge of the church property to McHard Road.

Light Church, as well as twenty-seven other faith-based churches or organizations. The closest denominational church near this site is a fledgling congregation four and a half miles to the north.[2]

Project Outcomes and Measureable Assessment

The first objective of this project is to prepare a construction readiness tool for use by Visions, but also for future use by other denominational churches within Texas (known as the Tenth Episcopal District). This document will be made available to the Trustees of the Texas Annual Conference, seeking approval of its use before submission to the Episcopal District for use and approval. Feedback and requested modification are anticipated due to the diversity of locales across the state that will need the instrument to be meaningful and user friendly. Input and other identified resources will be incorporated in the document. The measure of satisfactorily completing this objective will be its use by Visions and at least one other church considering construction.[3] The research will dictate the frequency of revisions in the future.

The second objective will require preparation of a business plan ready for submission to proposed lending institutions for Visions AME Church. This objective is two-fold. Visions needs a financial feasibility document to better evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and areas that require additional work before considering construction. The completion of a document worthy of submission will be the first measure of this

2. Demographic information comes from a Briargate, Houston, TX, Lifestyle and Demographics site and mapquest inquires using the given address of the church property of 15945 Gatebriar, Houston, TX 77489. See http://www.realtor.com/local/Briargate-Sub_Houston_TX/lifestyle (accessed on 11/04/2014).

3. This preconstruction document may or may not be used by a denominational church, although this is preferable.

objective. Additionally, no recommended template is available for churches within the denomination to guide this document preparation process. One or two other sister churches will be given the template to measure ease of duplication, which also will serve as a measure of successful completion of this objective.

The final objective is the measure of the congregation's readiness to undertake the construction project, both from a ministry service perspective and financial commitment perspective. A Church Conference will be held to disclose the anticipated level of involvement needed from congregants, including Capital Campaign pledges and donations required. Survey Monkey will be utilized to measure an anonymous inquiry into individual levels of commitment to the project. Second, initiation will be needed for twice-monthly training classes with the leadership to address ongoing spiritual needs that must be maintained at the current location throughout the building process. Use of online conferencing technology will be employed to improve attendance and participation. A self-assessment tool will be utilized to measure increased involvement in ministry activities in the church, with a ten percent increase as a success threshold.

As new ministries are formulated to address needs for reaching the Briargate area, a measure of the impact on resources, personnel and financial, to existing ministries will be assessed. Use of gifts in kind, donations, and volunteerism may offset some of the financial impact. Another survey will be the tool used to elicit opinions on this shifting focus. The formation of at least two new ministries developed from feedback of an evangelism team canvassing the neighborhood will measure completion of this objective.

Finally, eighty percent of the Capital Campaign financial goal must be secured before the construction process is ready for launch. Progress in building the fund will be

measured quarterly. Campaign envelopes, posters tracking thermometer-style progress toward the financial goal, and special appeal materials added to and tracked on the Church's Facebook donation section will present additional concrete measures.

Relevant History of Visions African Methodist Church

Visions was officially organized in February 1994 in the home of the Pastor, and it has continued under this shepherd since that time. With a fledgling membership of twenty five, mostly women, young adults, and children, the mission was to speak to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of the communities of Missouri City, Stafford, and southwest Houston. The focus is on reclaiming those who have fallen away from the fellowship of believers due to lack of diligence, perceived or real offenses that occurred within the body of Christ, and/or breeches in faith of the earthly leadership. Matt. 18:12 states, "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?" The church is motivated to develop fruit for the Kingdom of God, save the lost, and serve the needy. With a fusion of neo-Pentecostal and traditional worship styles, Visions has developed partnerships within the four walls and without, assisting other community entities and denominational connections in providing services to humanity. As a didactic and deliverance ministry, members are empowered and lives are transformed by teaching the principles of the Kingdom of God and working toward meaningful relationship with the Triune God. The congregation's size has ebbed and flowed through the years, and currently stands around forty-eight. Three ministers have served and trained with the Pastor over the years, going on to influence other harvest fields as God has called.

Relevant Personal History of Ministry

Every step in the life of this writer's life, from a retrospective view, provided periods of personal growth and spiritual formation in preparation for service as a pastor, church planter, and spiritual teacher and leader. At the age of seven, this writer accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Attending College Heights Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Chesnutt Street Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, opportunity for spiritual nurture were provided in the Sunday School and drama ministry. For three years of high school, this writer attended a boarding school in Virginia, St. Margaret's Episcopal Preparatory School, on an Anne C. Stouffer Scholarship. Participation represented a social experiment designed to integrate predominantly white southern prep schools and expose their races to each other in a more intimate exchange. She graduated with honors and went on to matriculate a Bachelor of Arts degree in Zoology, from the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, focusing on human behavior. While there, she joined St. Paul AME Church, sang in the gospel choir, and chaired the Annual Young Women's Day celebration. She continued her studies post-graduation, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree as a Physician Assistant at Howard University from 1978-80, while developing her spiritual self at Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, Maryland. She later returned to North Carolina to work as a medical practitioner at Caswell Center in Kinston, an institution for the mentally retarded. She joined St. James AME Church, where she served as a Youth Director, Steward, member of the Women's Missionary Society, Bible Study Instructor, and active member of the gospel choir. To satisfy a thirst for spiritual growth, she additionally attended Bible study at Emmanuel Hill Free Will Baptist Church and sang in the gospel choir there, with

the blessing of both Pastors. This writer's commitment to the things of God and ecumenical exposure influenced an attitude of openness to the possibilities of Kingdom work.

In 1985, she married and moved to Houston, joining Payne Chapel AME Church in 1986. The call of God to pastoral ministry came in 1988, with ordination as an itinerant deacon in 1990, and as an itinerant elder in 1992. She has served as a member of the ministerial staff of three congregations. In obedience to the call of God to plant a new work in southwest Houston/Missouri City, this writer founded Visions A.M.E. Church in 1994, in Missouri City/Stafford, Texas, and became founder and President of Crossroads Community Development Corporation.

In preparation for the work, this writer attended Houston Graduate School of Theology beginning in 1989, obtaining a Masters of Divinity degree in 1998, and currently she is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry. She is a frequent speaker in the AME Church and community, and she currently serves as a member of the Board of Examiners for the Texas Conference, lead instructor for candidates in the first year of study for ordained ministry in the denomination, and member of the Judicial Council for Texas Conference. Her leadership gifts and abilities are dominant in the areas of administration, teaching, and healing. The writer also has a thirty-four year history as a physician's assistant, working for the last twenty-seven years at the Michael E. DeBakey Veteran Affairs Medical Center.

Topics for Project Research

In a denominational church, it is easy to slip into the practice of traditional patterns of worship and church polity without examining the biblical or theological

worthiness of such actions. Initial research for this project centers on seeking to clarify the understanding of "church" as the body Christ, not as the architectural structures that house worship. Research will be presented that examines the biblical models of the earthly tabernacle, the divine design of which was shared with Moses, given to him as a pattern of the heavenly tabernacle. Second, the expanded utilitarian temple of Solomon will be explored. From a New Testament perspective, the riverside church of Lydia, as well as the home church, will be presented, as it relates to the daily activity and centrality of life and faith in the early church.

The church edifice, in terms of what it represents in the life of the community in which it is housed, has transformed over time and locale. Research from this historical perspective will be meaningful for the pre-construction phase. Current trends in worship and ministry facilities will then be explored with the purpose of arriving at a conceptual architectural plan for a twenty-first century church. Juxtaposed to the considerations for the structural church are the postmodern practices of worship and community outreach impacted by the Missional and Emerging church movements.

Finally, the unchurched may be better attracted to a "consumer-friendly" outer appearance of a church complex, and research in this area may suggest some surprising attitudes on this subject.

Project Overview

The goal will be to assess the construction readiness of this local church in the pursuit of establishing a more permanent worship and meeting space. The proposed facility must allow for a more meaningful impact on the ministries in which the church is involved. Thoughtful consideration must therefore be given to the biblical, theological,

and historical concepts that guide the final plans. Impact for the present and future benefits of the church's presence in this community can be maximized if all of these factors are considered.

To aid in project effectiveness, inclusion of the entire congregation, under the leadership of the Pastor and elected Trustees, will be encouraged throughout the evaluation process. The spiritual undergirding of the work, requiring prayer support teams to intercede for the success of the project, will provide foundational support. Attention to the continued spiritual formation of the members, emphasizing operating in their areas of giftedness, will guide the Bible study, sermon, and guest workshop topics. Part of this proposed didactic focus includes an exploration of missional concepts. A special event for the neighborhood surrounding the construction lot will introduce the church to the neighborhood and begin to identify those persons seeking a place to transform or begin the life journey to live into the image of Christ.

Steps to achieve the Project goal and objectives include: 1) research of books and journal articles on concepts of church, worship, church architecture, utility of worship and service space, and the future direction of the church to project "building forward" design, 2) interviews with pastors who have maneuvered the hurdles of church construction, and 3) assessing denominational resources where appropriate.

Preliminary Project Resources

A detailed study of the earthly tabernacle, as presented in Exod. 25-40 and Heb. 9, guides the biblical and theological perspectives of this writer on structural places of worship.

F. F. Bruce's *The Epistle to the Hebrews* and an Old Testament commentary such as Walter Brueggemann's *The Book of Exodus* in The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, are under consideration as research sources. Concepts on the missional church and foundational influences on ministry and service will be anchored by David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*, and journal writings from Lesslie Newbigin. Mark Dever, and Paul Alexander provide additional resources in their book *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel.* Finally, this writer has limited knowledge on the building process, and research in this area will need to be instructive, informative, and directive for the project. Sources selected include J. Dean Morgans's *The Church Construction Kit: A Complete Project Guide for Church Building Program,* Stephen Anderson's *Preparing to Build: Practical Tips and Experienced Advice to Prepare Your Church for a Building Program,* and James F. White's *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations*. All procedures for building projects must be in harmony with the current edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,* which will serve as the denominational resource.

Procedural Outline and Timeline

The student has developed a timeline for project development with dates as noted below:

1. Meet with the Church Trustees. Begin a search of construction company candidates. Narrow down to 2-3 choices by April (January 2015).
2. Call a Church Conference to vote on agreement to pursue building process, including readiness assessment (January 2015).
3. Develop a readiness checklist with action items (February 2015).

4. Administer new spiritual gifts inventory to congregation (March 2015).
5. Organize ministry teams for outreach efforts and begin training (March 2015).
6. Meet with construction company candidates. Select architect candidates (April 2015).
7. Prepare documents for the lending institutions (April 2015).
8. Meet with Conference Trustees (July 2015).
9. Request soil analysis (July 2015).
10. Meet with architect candidates (August 2015).
11. Evaluate project readiness (September 2015).
12. Complete Project (November 2015).

Organizational Structure and Resources for Project Report

In Chapter I, Introduction, this writer will state the problem within the project's context, which is the assessment and readiness of Visions African Methodist Episcopal Church to build a facility for worship and community service in the southwest Houston area. The proposed or envisioned solution to the problem is to prepare a readiness tool to identify and assess those items inclusive in successful construction projects, and just as important, the preparation of the congregation pre- and post- construction. Research will focus on the church structure as it relates to utility for ministry and development of usable information to share with other churches within the denomination. The measurable outcomes include: 1) the successful use of Visions and another church of the readiness tool, 2) the completion of an appropriate document or business plan suitable for submission to financial institutions, 3) serial surveys of increase in ministry projects,

evaluation of the congregation's commitment to the project, and preparation for expanded ministry, and 4) a measure of the success of a Capital Building Campaign.

In Chapter II, the Research chapter, five sections will be covered. A biblical review of the earthly tabernacle found in Exod. 25-40, Solomon's Temple and the Zerubbabel's Temple will be given, noting their implications for worship and practicality. Theologically, the view of the people of God as living stones and the New Testament revelation that the body of believers is the church will be explored. A look at Protestant church designs through the years will provide historical knowledge. The sociological research will focus on the activity within the temple or religious complex. Finally, the ecclesiastical (denominational) foundations of the project will share church buildings and designs common to AME Churches through the years.

In Chapter III, Action, this writer will show evidence of what was done during the project itself, where the work was done, with whom, why, how, and when. Resource and contact information will be given to facilitate replication by other churches if desirous in the future.

In Chapter IV, Evaluation, this writer will report what evaluative tools were employed to measure the statistical data, both qualitative and quantitative. These will include observations and summaries from all pre- and post- surveys and assessment tools designed for the project as previously stated.

In Chapter V, Conclusion, this writer will state lessons learned along the journey, recommendations for future action, and what future plans will be scheduled given the completed work of the project.

Project Accountability

This writer will receive permission for the project to begin from the Presiding Prelate of the Tenth District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie. The Project Advisory Team will consist of the Rev. Dr. Ella McDonald, a church planter, builder, and Pastor, and Mr. James A. Sanders, a General Contractor and former Construction Project Manager for Paul Quinn College, an AME Church College in Dallas, Texas.

Project File

The Project file will contain surveys, business plan, and construction and ministry assessment tools with a summary of the findings. As well, the newly formed ministry training material will be included as a resource in the Project Report Appendix. This writer will keep records and submit monthly reports to the supervisory team accounting the progress of the project. Documentation of individual and group meetings with the project advisory team members, whether in person or by video conferencing, will continue until the Project is officially underway. Action items will be included to keep record of particular stories and events along the way.

It is the vision of this student that her Project will accomplish the purposes set forth herein. Further, it is her intention to leave useful and useable tools for other churches seeking to undergo building projects in the twenty-first century and beyond.

Proposal Submission 11/09/2014

Doctor of Ministry Committee Action:

Date of Committee Approval ____/____/____

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